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Social questions from the  
point of view of Christian



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# SOCIAL QUESTIONS

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

BY THE

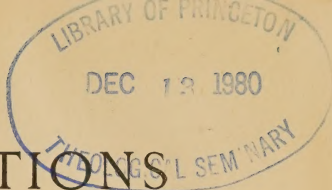
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RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, ST. MARYLEBONE.

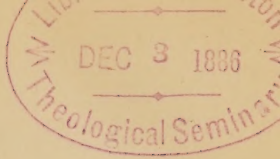
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## PREFACE.

THE principle which these discourses aim at expounding is that which has been concisely stated by Mr. Huxley,—“Under its theological aspect, morality is obedience to the will of God.” The God of Christian theology is the Father who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, the Power working in all creation and development, the Providence guiding mankind. For those who believe in this God the ultimate source and rule of morality can be no other than his Will.

That Will may be plain or obscure ; there may be one way, or a hundred ways, of arriving at the knowledge of it ; but, so far as it can be known, it is manifestly supreme and ultimate. It is a ground on which the mind can repose with a sense of its being the most solid foundation that can be reached, an authority the questioning of which is inconceivable. In its relation to this Will the

conscience assumes its proper character ; it is an ear rather than a voice, the natural acknowledgment of the Maker's rights, the intelligence of the creature answering, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

If we ask the philosophers of the day for an explanation of duty and morality, they show their weakness just where Christian theology is so firm and strong. They have had a most impressive success in tracing the historical development of moral feelings and rules, but they can find no scientific basis for duty, no adequate explanation of conscience. And yet there is no serious scientific thinker who is willing to abandon and treat as impostures those assertions of the authority of right which to him are in the air, not touching the solid ground on which it is his boast to take his stand. Not Mr. Spencer, nor Mr. Huxley, nor Sir Fitzjames Stephen, nor Mr. Leslie Stephen, still less Dr. Congreve or Mr. Harrison, will consent to admit that a man may without blame do as he likes. These teachers are all high-minded moralists, looking up as well as down, forward as well as backward ; but in this character they cannot claim to be scientific. They say with

fervour, "I ought, you ought," without being able to give a rational explanation of what they mean in so speaking.

What I desire to urge upon my fellow-Christians is, that we should take note of this position of things; that we should apply our own principle with more confidence to the circumstances in which we find ourselves; and that we should be frankly willing to learn from the investigations of naturalists and historians. We must accept corrections, I believe, in the sphere of history, and admit that things have not been in the past exactly what Christian tradition has supposed and stated them to be. But we have encouragement to take our stand more firmly than ever on the spiritual disclosures which have been given to us, and to which agnostic morality pays its extra-scientific homage; to inquire with ardent hopefulness what is the Will of our Father in heaven in all things; and to study the present and strive to mould the future in the light of that Will.





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## I.

# WHAT IS MORALITY?

(Preached before the University of Oxford, 9th December 1883.)

“Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.”

MATTHEW vi. 10.

THE movement of modern speculation, having been driven forward by its latest and most powerful impulses to a point at which it is brought face to face with the fundamental principles of human life, seems to be arrested by the immense difficulty as well as the supreme importance of the problems thus presented to it. The problems are not new. The meaning of right and wrong, the reasonableness of praise and blame, the roots of the sense of duty, the component elements of virtue, the object of life, have been abundantly discussed before now. But they may be practically treated as new, inasmuch as a new kind of knowledge can now be brought to bear upon them; and they are attacked with

new confidence by those who possess this knowledge. Scientific men are the admitted leaders of the movement of to-day, and they are feeling themselves called upon, in the name of the great law of which they are the heralds, and to which they profess absolute allegiance, to bring human life, with its motives and aims as well as its passions, under the dominion to which the whole intelligible universe appears to be subject. They are doing their best to show that there is no living authority but that of Evolution in the world of human action any more than in the world of physical phenomena. They cannot as yet claim to be very successful as moralists. They have thrown real light upon the history of morality ; but questions such as these—Is there any authority to which human conduct owes submission ? Is there any ideal at which human action should universally aim ?—are visibly embarrassing to them. They cannot put them aside as having no reality, and their answers to them have not yet attained the uniformity and security which should characterise the utterances of science.

It is usual in ethical discussions to wave theology aside. It is assumed by the thinkers



to whom I refer, that all theological considerations belong to the pre-scientific period. Even on the part of those who maintain the cause of a spiritualist or transcendental philosophy against the predominance of physical science, there is an endeavour to keep the name of God out of ethics, and to make something in man himself the authority by which morality is determined. But theology, so long as it has any life, will not consent to be put out of the synagogue of the serious interests of mankind. The notion that Christian theology separates itself from the things of this world is an utterly mistaken one. The Christian cannot relegate his God to the clouds. He is compelled to stand by the old Christian principle, that the will of God is the one real and comprehensive authority to which all human action owes allegiance. Is there any reason why he should shrink from asserting this principle in the presence of other doctrines of morality?

In the attempts made to reduce human conduct completely under the law of Evolution, the only authority prescribing to men how they should act and what they should be, is assumed in general to be that of necessity.

It is held that men, and societies of men, are what their antecedents have made them, in the same sense in which a tree or a glacier is completely accounted for by the causes which have produced it. It is explained that the conduct called good is that which is favourable to social well-being, and that men are necessarily urged to this, though with delay and confusion due to imperfect adjustment, by the natural pursuit of their own happiness and by the compulsion which the general sentiment exercises upon them. So morality has grown, it is said, and so it will grow in the future; nature has made morality and will continue to make it. Mr. Herbert Spencer, so justly recognised as the chief of the scientific school, is able to set forth to his complete satisfaction the actual processes by which the laws which govern the world will, as a matter of absolute certainty, make the human race better and happier until it arrives at its perfection.

Such a view suggests the obvious reflection that, if this is so, man has no freedom, no responsibility; that all the common language of men about right and wrong, conscience and duty and honour, sin and guilt, is made

unmeaning. The inference is no less irresistible than it is obvious, and it is not disposed of by the indignant protestation that the leaders of the scientific movement are men not only of irreproachable morals, but even of virtuous zeal. This is happily true : and it proves that men may hold what are called agnostic opinions, and be at the same time of high character. Their own doctrine, it may be observed, would account for their virtue by pointing to their antecedents ; it would call attention to the facts that they are descended from a long line of Christian generations, and have inherited natures stocked with accumulated Christian sentiment, and have been themselves nurtured on Christian traditions ; and it would affirm that they are what Christianity and not Agnosticism has made them. But let the personal character of those who explain morality by evolution and necessary causation be left respectfully out of the question. Their doctrine claims to be rigidly scientific ; and the question is whether that doctrine does not empty the word Duty, for example, of the force with which under other systems it appeals to the conscience and imagination

of men. They profess to show how the feeling of obligation has been generated; they trace it in the main to the demand which has been made through so many ages by external authority—that of religion, that of civil enactments, that of public opinion—upon the conduct of the individual. But the scientific effect of this explanation appears to be to explain away the old sense of obligation. It unclothes a scarecrow by which men have been awed; it invites them to shake themselves free, if they please, from an incubus which need no longer lie upon them. With the help of this scientific exposure they are to see that the authority which they had been taught to reverence was simply the will of the more and the stronger coercing the will of the one; they are to see that the so-called freedom of the will is nothing but the struggle of contending motives, and that these motives are strictly determined by antecedent causes; they are to see, when the drapery of life is taken off by the unshrinking hand of science, that men are but automata, subject to illusions which nature has generated for its own ends, and which the same nature in bringing forth

science is now dispelling. There are few of his followers who can bring themselves to share Mr. Spencer's complacent optimism; to most of them his ideals seem commonplace and depressing, his trust in the necessary operations of nature too absolute; they show symptoms of suffering—in John Stuart Mill's words—"under the burden, so heavy to one who aims at being a reformer in opinions, of thinking one doctrine true and the contrary doctrine morally beneficial." Their candour often forbids them to hide from their readers that they consciously shrink from the consequences of their analysis. The most eminent of our scientific men, Mr. Huxley, whose frankness is as admirable as his courage and logical clearness, turns away with something like disdain from that optimism of his chief; and his conclusion is that morality, after all, cannot be brought under the dominion of those laws by which Hume and Spencer would bind it. In his own words, "Morality is based on feeling, not on reason;" "the moral law rests in the long run upon instinctive intuitions." To have a genius or a turn for morality is like having a genius or a turn for music or painting. To



be without a sense of duty is like being unable to distinguish good music from a street melody. It would seem rationally to follow, if we were not warned against appealing to reason when morality is in question, that we have no more right to blame a man for being treacherous or brutal than we have to blame him for not having an ear for music.

Now—to quote another sentence from the same thinker—“Under its theological aspect, morality is obedience to the will of God.” What I desire to affirm is that, for those who are still able to look at anything under a theological aspect, morality, as thus defined, is based not upon feeling only but also upon reason. If there be a God at all, whether he be the God of the Christian, or the God of the Deist, or the God of the Pantheist, I can imagine no more inexpugnable, no more scientific, principle than this, that morality is obedience to his will. Even if we take account of that impossible creed, to which Mill confesses that he felt attracted, that there is a worse God, a Demiurge, acting through nature, and a better God of limited power struggling with him, the moral man is he who

chooses the good God for his and sets himself to obey him. So far as all those who believe in any God at all are concerned, what is the use, I would ask, of seeking any other theory of the basis of morality than this, that man is bound to conform himself in character and conduct to the will of God?

I have alluded to the fact that it is usual to allow theology to be bowed more or less politely to the door when ethical questions are discussed. There are two ways in which theology is commonly discredited with reference to morality. It is identified with "dogmatic enactments." It is assumed that if there are any who still hold that the ultimate law and authority in morals are to be found in dogmatic enactments,—as in the Ten Commandments for example,—they may be very respectable persons, but they are not to be reasoned with. To call any proposition a dogma is to give it a bad name. Men speak with evident complacency of being emancipated from dogma. Those who proclaim that they still glory in dogma have to summon up something of a chivalrous feeling to enable them to do so. Most of us have some lurking reluctance to be reckoned

amongst the subjects or upholders of dogmas. The other way is by bringing rewards and punishments into the front. The God of theology is assumed to be saying, "I bid you do this and refrain from that. If you obey me, you shall be rewarded with infinite happiness; if you disobey me, you shall be punished with infinite torments." Obedience to arbitrary precept, extorted by such promises and threats, has not a noble appearance; and we may reasonably be challenged to think meanly of it, compared with the disinterested virtuous zeal of an Agnostic. But it is also reasonable for us to plead, Do not identify God with dogmas, or with rewards and punishments; it is not of these that we speak primarily, though when they have fallen into their proper places they may there find their due significance. What we name is the will of God. We suppose ourselves to be God's creatures. Can we conceive any more ultimate principle than this, that the Maker's will is the true and real guide for those whom he brings into being and fashions? Is there anything more natural than that we should look to the will of our God for authoritative guidance simply because he is our God

and it is his will? The old question, whether we are to assume that the laws of right and wrong proceed from the arbitrary will of God, or that righteousness is a law to which the very nature of God himself does homage, may be easily reduced to an idle controversy. It is without meaning for those who hold that Righteousness is a name for the Divine nature. A far more impracticable problem than this faces us, "Thou wilt say, who hath resisted his will?" It is a problem before which all the speculation of man has recoiled baffled. How can a creature choose whether he will or will not do the will of his Maker? Must not theology be necessarian, as well as evolutionism? If we only exchange for necessary natural causation the idea of an irresistible Divine will, we fall into those notions of automatism against which human life, which is stronger than the intellect, wages war to the death. It is wiser to give way to those imperishable instincts with which all that is high and precious in human existence is bound up for life and for death, than to allow ourselves to be ruled by a logic which degrades us. We can do nothing but put the problem aside, so far at least as intel-

lectual discussion is concerned, and resolve to take for granted that man is called upon to choose and is responsible for choosing. At the same time, that we may speak with the due caution and reserve which such a mystery imposes, and may not, in boastfully asserting the freedom of the will, set ourselves against vital spiritual truth as well as against logic, it will be profitable to remember what Luther urged with so much vehemence against Erasmus, that the will of the natural man may more properly be described as being in bondage than as free, and that the will only becomes truly free when it is redeemed into fellowship with the Divine will. It is better to believe in the good Divine will which is not to be foiled than in man's independence. Nevertheless, when we are asked, "How can a creature of God go counter to the will of his Almighty Maker?" we shall insist that with reference to the matter which we have in view, man has resisted and does resist the will of God, and that he is to be blamed for doing so; and we shall confess ourselves unable to bring into agreement the statements we may find ourselves compelled to make as to God's power and pre-ordination,



and man's responsibility for making a right choice.

But when we have said that morality is at bottom obedience to the will of God, there is another reply which this assertion will draw forth as a matter of course—"Yes, but how is this will of God to be ascertained?" There is no difficulty in giving a first and summary answer to that question. The will of God is to be ascertained by all the means through which we can obtain any knowledge of it. Our difficulties begin when we begin to consider what those means are. To know the will of God is to have some knowledge of God himself. And what a question we enter upon, when we begin to discuss how, and to what extent, it is possible for us to know God! What, however, I am desirous of urging is this, that the most thorough and scientific account of duty, and at the same time the most edifying aspect of it, for those who believe that they can in any way learn anything of the will of God, is to recognise that man is bound to conform himself to that will.

We who are assembled here for Christian worship hold that our most important and

truest knowledge of God has been given to us through his son Jesus Christ. He who by divers portions and in divers manners and in divers countries had spoken to men by prophets, spoke to them at last by his Son, and that communication we call in a supreme sense the Word of God. Through looking upon the Son we infer what the Father is ; and seeing in the Son of God a brother man, we learn what his Father and ours would wish every man to be. The revelation of the Divine will is not made to us through injunctions and enactments, or made only partially and superficially through these ; it is made in history—that is to say, through human spirits and lives, the consummate revelation being given in the perfect character and life. We have thus learnt to associate the highest conceivable righteousness and love with the nature of God ; to believe that he is light and in him is no darkness at all. And on us men a claim is made, as authoritative as can be imagined, that we should walk as children of light, bringing forth that fruit of light which is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

Those who do not see what we do in

Jesus Christ are yet not unaffected by this supreme revelation. Who could look upon him, and altogether resist the evidence which he gives of a divine destination of man? The influence and effects of Christ's coming are not measured by men's theories about him. He is the great power, let men's creed be what it may, to constrain them to think worthily of the ruling power of the universe, and in their thoughts concerning human character and conduct also to sever the darkness from the light. In using the other means for attaining to a knowledge of God's will, such as the testimony of the human conscience, and the stream of tendency in human affairs, not only are such depths of motive not revealed to us, but we are in danger of mixing evil with good. When we contemplate the world as it has been and is, it is not a scene of undisturbed order and pure love and joy that is spread before us; it is a scene of all kinds of imperfection and confusion and conflict. If we are to infer from the world as a whole the character and will of the Maker of all things, can we help crediting him with all that is bad as well as with all that is good? Here we touch upon

a problem, substantially the same under another form as that to which I referred just now, which equally in this form we are unable to solve. What is the meaning of evil? What is its relation to the action and will of the Creator? We can give no satisfactory answer to these questions. We cannot speak freely about God and evil, unless we make up our minds not to shrink from apparently contradictory statements. We gladly think of evil as an occasion of higher good: but—apart from the fact that very often we can trace no sign of its being so used—it seems to be implied in this view that God introduces evil as a part of his divine machinery, and this we dare not formulate as an article of our creed. We can but override the difficulty which we are unable to remove. If we are driven to the alternative, it is truer as well as more important to think of God as all-righteous than as Almighty. Christ gives us conviction to affirm that God is light and in him is no darkness at all; and he awakens and sustains the testimony of our consciences that we also are called to have no fellowship with the works of darkness. To the Christian, evil is the enemy, and men are to fight

against it with unqualified aversion. Apart from Christ, high-minded men have had inspiration and courage thus decisively to repudiate evil ; but nature and the world will hardly suggest this confident conviction to those who take the course of nature and the laws of the visible world for their only guides.

The faith that the One God is morally perfect, and that he desires moral perfection in his human children, does not oblige us, however, to reject the instruction to be gained from a study of the course of things ; it should give us discernment to extract the true instruction from that study. No one who knows anything of the history of morality, as it has been illustrated of late years, will deny that there has been growth and development in human conduct as well as in the inferior forms of life. It would be equally idle to deny that the discovery of the principle of evolution in morality is disturbing in a serious degree some of the common religious traditions of Christendom. We part slowly with beliefs that have been associated with all that we hold most sacred. Who could wish that it should be otherwise ? The pro-

cess of disengagement, by which the things that can be shaken are removed whilst the things that cannot be shaken remain, is one which is best carried out by time ; and it is well for a Church and a generation when the process is gradual and not revolutionary, so that previous spiritual attachments may be as little injured as possible. At present, evidence seems to be accumulating to the effect that, as the forms of animal life have been developed by unceasing growth and modification through periods of unimaginable length, so the forms of human social life have been improved by a gradual rise through very long periods and in apparent conformity to natural laws from the lowest kind of existence to the highest yet attained. It is becoming clear that with regard to human spiritual history, and not only with regard to the methods of physical creation, the past has not been what Christians of former generations have supposed it to be. What modifications of current belief may ultimately be required by these discoveries it would be probably premature to pronounce. Already it has been perceived that there is some welcome light in the law of development.

We gladly apply it to the relation of the Old Testament moral ideas to those of the New. We lay down with confidence, no one objecting, that the morality of the books of Moses belongs to a more elementary stage of human history than that of the Sermon on the Mount. We are becoming accustomed to the great conception of God as an Educator, who with eternal patience trains the races of men into ever higher knowledge and use of the principles implied in their creation. Nothing is the less Divine, we are beginning to understand, for being natural. And it is interesting to notice how, in the very first flush of that new revelation which was given to men in Jesus Christ, and of the exciting experiences of sudden enlightenment and moral change which were familiar to the Apostolic generation, it was yet perceived that the will of God was to be intelligently sought for through contact with the environment of the seeker. The great motives of conduct, it was assumed, had been revealed in Jesus Christ. But it remained then, and it remains now, to judge how these principles are to be applied in practice. The perplexities of life are to the conscientious frequent



and trying. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" is a question which individuals have continually to ask; and the same need of guidance is often felt by societies and generations with regard to the social problems which Time proposes to them. And we can see that the advice which St. Paul deliberately gave to Christians was, that they should turn their hearts to the Lord and then go on putting things to the test of experience, in the confidence that through probation or experience they would be rightly guided. "Walk as children of light, proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord." To prove here is to ascertain by testing, to gain assurance from the witness of experience. So he says again, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." And with a similar feeling that the experience of life is a trustworthy source of knowledge and the proper verification of theories, he exhorts the Ephesians, "Look carefully how ye walk, not as unwise but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Yes, St. Paul was

far from holding that the will of the Lord was sufficiently set down in injunctions. He held that the revelation of it was given through character and life; and that that revelation was not exhausted when Jesus Christ went up into heaven, but was continued through the ages to those who looked for it. "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, this also will God reveal to you; only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk." Walk or live conscientiously and intelligently, and you may expect to learn as you advance. Honour, I say, is thus put upon the experience of life, as one great medium through which the will of God is revealed. When we ask, which of two courses or relations is the more pleasing to God, is the more congenial to righteousness and love?—we may be sent back with the answer, "Try their issues loyally, and you will learn."

We are encouraged, therefore, to regard the evolution of morality as the Divine education of the human race. It is a history of continuous probation, in which principles and relations and dispositions have been undergoing practical tests, and which has put

its stamp—the stamp of Divine approval—on those which are most favourable to human well-being. Such a view has not occurred to the illustrious exponent of the doctrine of evolution as a possible one. If, says Mr. Spencer, it be admitted that the acts called good naturally conduce to human well-being, and the acts called bad to human ill-being, then the doctrine that there is no origin for moral rules apart from the Divine will must be abandoned. The will of God must be considered as revealed either in sacred writings or in conscience. To allow, therefore, that moral rules may be established by induction from observed consequences is to allow that there is another source for them than the Divine will. “From this implication,” he observes, “I see no escape.” We escape from it easily enough by holding that the Divine will is not revealed only in sacred writings and the intuitions of conscience, but also in the order and course of things. And what kind of a God would he be, who should have nothing to do with the laws and processes of the world? If it is asked whether we gain anything by putting the Divine name on a branch of universal and necessary

causation, we have to make the same protest as before, that we cannot think—and neither Mr. Spencer nor any one else does think—of our lives as governed by necessary causation in such a sense that nothing can be otherwise than as it is predestined to be. We know the old story of the fatalist philosopher who, when his slave pleaded that he had only committed a theft because it was fated that he should, answered that it was also fated that he should be flogged for it. A good answer it was ; but it was a mocking answer, and one that mocked at the fatalism of the master more than at the plea of the poor slave. If, when Mr. Spencer is honourably indignant at oppression, his anger is not to be considered as mechanical as the posturing of an automaton, he can hardly forbid us to recognise some other element in human action than its physical and psychological antecedents. Thou canst not tell whence the Divine breath cometh, and whither it goeth, but thou hearest the voice thereof. Any voice which reaches the inward ear of a man and commends to him justice and goodness, is a voice from heaven, whether it speak through the syllables of a book or through

the lips of a man, or through the observed consequences of actions.

The doctrine of what has been called independent morality disparages the observed consequences of actions as a source of moral rules, and affirms that moral principles inhere in the constitution or spiritual nature of man. The evolutionist is able to accept this latter statement as substantially true, explaining intuitive apprehensions as the accumulated deposit of hereditary experiences and impressions. Christian theology is more decidedly at issue with the doctrine of independent morality. Instead of treating the human conscience as a law-giver, it represents God as the living eternal Law-giver, and the human conscience as the receiver of the law. It would call the conscience an ear rather than a voice. And Christianity, bearing witness of God who speaks with authority and insisting earnestly on man's dependence, has an interest in welcoming the proposition that whatever is for the advantage of the human race is to be called good, or in other words, has the Divine sanction. Faith could not possibly think of God as not desiring the well-being of his creatures. And it is of

the highest importance, in the view of Christian theology, that we should be led to regard ourselves as subject to an authority external to ourselves, for the intimations of which, whether given within or without, we should be continually on the watch, an authority unveiled by the Gospel to the soul of man, and having all the awfulness of supreme righteousness and love, enforcing every perception of what is right and good with the imperative purpose of the Lord of heaven and earth.

Will the human conscience, my brethren, ever be thoroughly persuaded that there is no authority to which it owes allegiance? As we look into ourselves we find it difficult to think so. The reasonings of philosophers, supported by the predispositions of the flesh, may do something to create this persuasion; but they will hardly succeed in altering the most ancient and deeply-rooted forms of human language, and when the authority is supposed to be repudiated it will often be only clothed in some misleading disguise. Who can affirm a moral authority over all the actions of men more sternly than the followers of Auguste Comte? They are serious

men, full of ardour in the service of mankind; and it is impossible for them to acquiesce in the assumption that there is no unseen power prescribing to men how they should walk. But they think the belief in God obsolete. What then are they compelled to do? They reinstate the Eternal Source of Righteousness and Love in the drapery of an *Eidolon* which they call humanity, and render to it a devout worship which puts the multitude of theists to shame. It is not physical Nature that will constrain men to believe in a God; it is to the conscience, through the struggles of temptation and the longings after better things, that God makes himself necessary. It is on the field of morality that the battle between atheism and the worship of a God must be fought out. And the only God who can be preached with success to the consciences of men is the Perfect Righteousness and Love, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A wholesome shock has been recently given to the world, to the English world at all events, by one of the observations which M. Renan, in the ripeness of his experience, has offered for the guidance of the younger generation. Nature, he finds, does not pre-



scribe a chaste life ; and Nature, in default of a revealed God, is the only authority he recognises. No, we Christians say, Nature may not prescribe a chaste life, but the Eternal God does, and he will not allow his Commandments to be disobeyed with impunity. Do not try, my younger brethren, to disembarass yourselves of the fear of God as you go to encounter the temptations of life. To do so is to take off your strongest armour, and to expose yourselves in weakness to the assaults of passion. Other arguments may claim some control of your acts ; it is the living God only who asserts a claim over the inward man. It is in self-surrender to the Eternal Righteousness and Love that moral strength is to be won. Trust and worship are the life within from which all worthy human conduct issues. Religion, some would protest, is one thing, and morality another. But these names, religion and morality, are technical terms with which we can dispense, and which our vital interests will unceremoniously thrust aside. The question is, how is a man to walk rightly and to overcome evil ? How is he to be true, inwardly and outwardly, to what he

knows to be best ? It is to faith and hope and love, all looking to an Object above man, that the guiding and enabling power belongs. They can claim it in the name of experience and fact, of the consciousness and character of renewed persons, of the history of periods of reformation. Into the soul that is opened by faith and hope and love the Divine Spirit pours his own victorious strength. The filial mind, looking up to the perfect Father in heaven, is the sinless mind which cannot transgress the law. It will put itself joyfully at the Father's service, to do his will, and to help to get it done throughout the world.

## II.

# THE AIM OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

(Preached before the University of Oxford, 20th January 1884.)

“That we may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Christ.”—EPH. iv. 15.

THE New Testament places the Lord Jesus Christ before us as well as behind us. It enables us to look upon him as he walked in Galilee and Jerusalem, proclaiming the kingdom of heaven, bearing witness to the Father, doing works of grace and power, and as he died his death of sacrifice and rose again from the dead; but it also teaches us to look forward, and to see the same Jesus the Head of perfected humanity, the magnet and goal of the individual Christian's progress. Each believer is exhorted to run the race that is set before him with his eyes on Jesus; the community of believers is to aim at such

growth as will in time produce a body fit for Christ the Head.

It is characteristic of the modern scientific doctrine concerning man, as concerning other products of the creation, that it looks back along his history and seeks to approach as nearly as it can to his origin. Its province is to trace sequences ; it aims at explaining what things are by showing how they have come to be. The successes of science, in its work of retrospective investigation, have been so splendid, that we cannot wonder that its ambition should embrace the whole universe. Everything that is—so the devotees of science proclaim—is fully accounted for by the things which preceded it. All change, all development, is due to natural and necessary causation. Change, indeed, is nothing but development ; the antecedents enfolded the consequent, and could not help producing it. There are those who pronounce this law to be a universal one, for mind as well as for matter, and who use the theory of evolution to account for the most spiritual processes of human life. There is not an act, a gesture, an emotion, a disposition, which scientific men will not undertake to explain by its natural antecedents, as

surely as they account for the rain or for an eclipse. They would admit that there is a certain subtlety about the internal experiences of human nature which demands very skilful and patient analysis. But the only need is of competent observers and analysts. In time, they hold, the principle of natural development will be seen to explain everything in the creation which is now thought to be outside of it or above it.

To the ordinary human consciousness it is somewhat chilling to be thus treated as being nothing but a product of its antecedents. It would be interesting, no doubt, to learn with precision how I have come to think and feel as I do, and to be exactly what I am ; how my various emotions of anger and shame and affection, how every turn and shade of my thought, every colour of my imagination, have been evolved out of what went before them. It would be interesting to learn how the society of which I am a member has grown up, by means of the play of mutual conflict and help, from the most rudimentary desires. But if I could know myself as thoroughly as a flake of hoar-frost or a steam-engine is known, what would the knowledge

do for me? It makes my consciousness foolish. I cannot *live* by the faith of science. Man is so composed as to look outwards, and upwards, and forwards, even more than inwards and backwards; and he draws more of spiritual life from what is above him and before him than the most correct knowledge of the elements of which he is composed could breathe into him.

The scientific or physiological moralist would not admit, however, that he looks backwards only. Science claims the prerogative of predicting. No sooner did astronomers learn how an eclipse came to pass, than they acquired the power of foretelling when eclipses would be seen. The question whether there is as yet a genuine science of history has been understood to turn upon the question whether there is any science which can predict what future history will be as well as explain what past history has been. So the scientific moralist who has the courage of his opinions is ready to speak of the future. He bases his predictions upon the past. He sees progress in the past, progress which he can sufficiently define, and which he believes he can trace entirely to the necessary action

of natural causes. He concludes, therefore, that there will be more progress of the same kind. Every man, he assumes, is so constituted as to seek happiness or pleasure. That is the most elementary datum concerning man at which he can arrive. The desire of pleasure, he observes, has a tendency to win its way. Nature favours those in whom the desire is the strongest. Through the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest the more happy prevail over the less happy. So it will be in the future. Happiness is great, and will prevail. There are scientific thinkers who are as sure of this as they are that two and two make four.

There are others, however, who make the same prediction more diffidently. They cannot help seeing that progress in the past has not been uniform. Whole races, instead of learning to adjust themselves more harmoniously to their surroundings on this earth, have been improved by others off the face of it. The amount of happiness on extensive areas seems to have been diminished at certain periods, instead of being regularly increased. The recognition of large exceptions to the uniformity of progress in the past infuses an



element of uncertainty into the predictions of what progress must be in the future. We observe, moreover, that those who affirm a future reign of happiness to be most certain are unwilling that nature should use the same methods now as it has used in the past. Seeing in the militant action of the stronger races an influence which has hitherto promoted the survival of the fittest, they yet denounce with vehemence any similar action of a stronger race at the present day. Immediately after contemplating the universal happiness which evolution will in the course of time necessarily produce, Mr. Herbert Spencer appeals to the authority of Christianity against the action of a professedly Christian nation. He is not to be grudged the use of the *argumentum ad hominem*: but we are tempted to ask, Why does he not appeal to his own evolution rather than to our Christianity? Why does he not exhort his countrymen to do what he thinks desirable, by reminding them that they are links in a chain of necessary causation? On one page he writes as follows:—"Far off as seems such a state [the perfect state], yet every one of the factors counted on to produce it may

already be traced in operation among those of highest natures. What now in them is occasional and feeble, may be expected with further evolution to become habitual and strong; and what now characterises the exceptionally high may be expected eventually to characterise all." On the next page he taunts with their inconsistency "the ten thousand priests of the religion of love who are silent when the nation is moved by the religion of hate," and "their bishops who . . . vote for acting on the principle—strike lest ye be struck." It is difficult to understand how a worshipper of evolution can put absolute faith in natural impulses, whilst he finds it necessary so bitterly to denounce some of them.

Suppose that, in looking forward to the future, we adopted the view that the course of nature must necessarily evolve universal happiness: how is it likely that we should be affected by it? I imagine that it would tend to set us at ease. It cannot be denied that there is something comfortable in such a persuasion. It would be a relief to feel that on the broad scale men, do what they will, cannot so resist the tendencies of nature as

to destroy their own happiness ; or, to speak more accurately, as to prevent the spreading of happiness over the earth. It is ease, rather than exertion, that this faith would promote ; especially if, by making a man at each moment nothing but the product of his antecedents, it gives to free effort the character of an illusion. We cannot really live as if this were so ; but if a man draws any practical conclusion at all from the denial of free agency, it is likely to be that he need not give himself much trouble to do anything disagreeable to him.

And the account which Mr. Spencer gives of the perfect state, or the state to which evolution is necessarily bringing the world, is a picture that would naturally foster such impressions. The condition depicted is what Carlyle used to call "paradise for all and sundry." The time is coming, though it is not yet near, when every act of every man will be pleasurable. "The sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory, and will diminish as fast as moralisation increases." I am now quoting Mr. Spencer's words—"Evidently, with complete adaptation to the social state, that element in the moral

consciousness which is expressed by the word obligation will disappear. The higher actions required for the harmonious carrying on of life will be as much matters of course as are those lower actions which the simple desires prompt. In their proper times, and places, and proportions, the moral sentiments will guide men just as spontaneously and adequately as now do the sensations. And though, joined with their regulating influence when this is called for, will exist latent ideas of the evils which nonconformity would bring, these will occupy the mind no more than do ideas of the evils of starvation at the time when a healthy appetite is being satisfied by a meal." In accordance with this ideal of a pleasurable life, Mr. Spencer labours to show that nature puts egoism before altruism, and that there is no reason why we should not be contented with this arrangement. His chief quarrel with the moral doctrines which have hitherto prevailed is that they are not favourable enough to a rational egoism. He grows angry in denouncing the folly of persons who do not take sufficient care of themselves, enthusiastic in describing the agreeableness of good health and good spirits. With

that courage in carrying out his doctrines to their conclusions which distinguishes him, and which would make it doubly inexcusable to misrepresent him, he warns us against sympathising too much with those who suffer, because such sympathy will cause us to suffer also. In his own words, "while pain prevails widely, it is undesirable that each should participate much in the consciousness of others." The desirable sympathy he describes as a partaking of other people's pleasure. "In its ultimate form, then, altruism will be the achievement of gratification through sympathy with those gratifications of others which are mainly produced by their activities of all kinds successfully carried on ; sympathetic gratification which costs the receiver nothing, but is a gratis addition to his egoistic gratifications." It was precisely this ideal which attracted the imagination of Hume, although he thought of it rather as a state to which virtue might lead than as one to which nature is necessarily bringing mankind. "What philosophical truths," he asks, "can be more advantageous to society than those here delivered, which represent virtue in all her genuine and most engaging charms, and make us approach her

with ease, familiarity, and affection? The dismal dress falls off, with which many divines and some philosophers have covered her; and nothing appears but gentleness, humanity, beneficence, affability; nay, even at proper intervals, play, frolic, and gaiety. She talks not of useless austerities and rigours, suffering and self-denial. She declares that her sole purpose is to make her votaries, and all mankind, during every period of their existence, if possible, cheerful, and happy; nor does she ever willingly part with any pleasure, but in hopes of ample compensation in some other period of their lives. The sole trouble which she demands is that of just calculation, and a steady preference of the greater happiness."

Such is the aim which the believer in universal evolution holds out to his fellow-believers. The promise is of an Epicurean Paradise which all the human beings of a remote future are to inherit, and the advantages of which may be tasted even now by the wiser few. In the meantime every living man is invited to surrender himself to the influence of that ideal; if the word "ought" were not a solecism to the doctrine of evolu-

tion, we should say that each man ought to live so as to bring the ultimate Paradise nearer. His mind, withdrawn from any dreams of God or duty, will be set on satisfactions and gratifications, on pleasurable activities of all kinds, on personal and social happiness.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that this ideal is fully accepted by all agnostic evolutionists. Some will think that they have not sufficient warrant for creating any definite future at all. Others, it is evident, who have emancipated themselves from the acknowledgment of the supernatural, and have placed evolution on the throne in place of God, will continue to cherish imaginations of what they will persist in calling nobler and higher aims. They will glorify self-sacrifice as a hereditary instinct, to be admired without being justified. They will worship duty as a beneficent abstraction. The evolutionists of future generations will perhaps look back on this time of ours, as one in which nature continued still to breed illusions in minds which were delivered from the grosser errors, and made some use of those illusions in preparing the way for the millennium of unadulterated



pleasure, in which they would be no longer wanted.

Let us turn now to the Christian ideal. The Gospel of Christ, whilst it leaves mysteries all around us unsolved, and presents some of its own to the minds of men, is definite and plain enough in its dealings with human life. It does not encompass it with imaginations or abstractions. It interprets duty with decision. It tells men that the will of God, the will of their Maker, is the reason and law of human conduct, the universal foundation and comprehensive principle of all other reasons and laws. And it offers them an intelligible goal or aim towards which their free and intelligent endeavours are to strive. It speaks to them as being made to look forward, and as much more interested, indeed, in knowing what is before them, than in understanding the steps by which they have come to be what they are. It calls to all that is aspiring, unsatisfied, hopeful, in human nature. It has a single word, the name of Christ, for the goal and ideal of human life.

The Christianity of the Apostles does not set up personal satisfactions, whether of the

body or of the mind or even of the heart, before the aspirations and ambitions of men. It differs thus far from the later Christianity, which often has done so. We know too well how common it has been amongst Christians to represent escape from infinite suffering and the acquisition of infinite bliss as the one object which man has to keep in view. Spiritual Christianity has been continually defaced by materialistic corruptions; and what has worn the appearance and profession of unbelief has sometime been an honourable repugnance to the Christianity, not of God, but of men. I could not contend that the excitement of a convulsive effort to get away from the crumbling edge of a pit of all the horrors, or the hope of securing unimaginable enjoyments through the endless ages, is more exalting than the contemplation of a world of Epicurean perfection. But the true apostolic tradition sets Christ, not self, before the Christian man and the Christian community. I appeal to St. Paul, "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in

him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith : that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death ; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." I appeal to one like-minded with St. Paul, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith ;" and again to St. Paul, who speaks of what God has given "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ : till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we may . . . grow up in all things unto him which is the head, even Christ."

In dealing with moral questions we cannot separate individual human beings from the society of which they are members. No man lives to himself. Stress has been rightly laid by the scientific moralists of our day upon the necessarily social nature of man.

We are justly reminded that, as a moral being, a man is inconceivable apart from other men, and that it is impossible for any one man to be independent of the ways of thinking and of the habits, any more than of the interests, of the fellow-men with whom he lives. All this ought to be as familiar to Christians as to any one who now speaks of the tribal consciousness or of the social tissue. They have been taught by the New Testament to look on the single man as a limb, incomplete in itself and implying a body. "We are members one of another," is one of the principles upon which the Christian life is built up. But the individual man has a personal existence of his own, and his distinct purpose and effort are not to be lost in the general movement of the society. Under the Christian scheme, Christ is both the magnet of personal aspirations and the goal of the social development.

Let each man run his appointed race with his eyes upon Jesus Christ. What will this mean? He who so runs, we may say, will be seeking to get nearer and nearer to Christ. He will desire to grow into likeness to Christ; and also to be joined in fellowship with him.

The idea of fellowship with Christ, as we have seen, was that which was especially inspiring to St. Paul. Everything else was worthless to him, compared with a certain close union of heart and nature with Jesus Christ, for which he believed he might hope, and towards which all his better aspirations and efforts were tending. Do we not see with admiration, my Christian brethren, and with some distant envy, what glories and beauties of character were waked up in the life of this loyal disciple by the object which was continually before him? The labours of St. Paul are a miracle of noble and persistent enthusiasm, and he has himself displayed to us the fountain from which that enthusiasm was fed. The Christian whose mind goes with St. Paul's looks up to Christ as exalted to be the Head of mankind. The Son of man at the Father's right hand gathers up in himself all the interests of humanity. The issues of the future are hidden in him. The highest privilege for any mortal man is to be feeling with him, working with him. The true support for human weakness is to be conscious of being sustained by him: the satisfying guidance for human helplessness

is to be led on under his direction. The more the individual can lose himself in Christ, the more will he find himself; the better parts of his nature will be claimed and brought to their best, the meaner will be dignified and harmonized, the evil parts will be shamed away. To know Christ as Lord and Friend, and to be used by him for any service which he may require, would be to the faithful Christian the coveted prize and reward of all effort, of all self-discipline, of all endurance. In regulating the course of his life his supreme desire will be so to run that he may obtain. In such fellowship with Christ likeness to him is involved. Simply to keep the eyes on Christ would have some attracting influence on the character. We never admire without in some degree imitating. And the Christian who looks to Christ declares that Christ is the man whom he wishes to imitate and resemble.

We thus exalt the principle of sacrifice. For the Jesus to whom we look is the Crucified. There is a divine simplicity in the nature of our Master as exhibited to us by the apostolic traditions. He gave himself up. In that declaration his character and

work are summed. "Walk in love," is St. Paul's comprehensive exhortation, "even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us." And it is evident, on the face of the story of Jesus of Nazareth, that the surrender was made through suffering. "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He did not take for his guidance the principle that, "while pain prevails widely, it is undesirable that each should participate much in the consciousnesses of others;" but, on the contrary, he made it his work and his glory to bear the sins and infirmities of his fellow-men. His death was not His entire sacrifice; but his followers from the first have recognised that in dying upon the Cross he gave the culminating evidence of his true work, and the Cross has been fitly made his emblem. All, therefore, who strive to associate themselves with Christ are making the Crucified their ideal, and are accepting the principle of sacrifice as the highest and most dominant principle of human life. We look unto One who endured the Cross, despising the shame. If the principle of sacrifice is not the true and permanent and satisfactory motive of human conduct, then Christians



are on a wrong tack. And it is this principle which places Christianity in the clearest opposition to Epicureanism, or to any morality of necessary evolution.

At the same time the principle of sacrifice needs to have its proper Christian interpretation. It is only by Christianity, we may be bold to say, that self-sacrifice is explained and justified. There has been a great deal in what has been commonly called self-sacrifice which may be justly deprecated and condemned. Christianity is not responsible for the notion that to torment and injure oneself is meritorious and acceptable to God, any more than it is for many another materialistic and heathenish perversion which has usurped its authority. It is not Christian to make oneself gloomy and miserable, still less to inflict gloom and miserableness on others. The dismal dress with which Hume complains that virtue has been covered by many divines has been partly made up of rags of human righteousness. It ought to be remembered that sacrifice means offering. St. Paul gives us the authentic account of self-sacrifice in those words of his, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies

a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," that is, which is your spiritual worship. Though it may seem paradoxical to say so, sacrifice does not necessarily imply pain. Suffering is rather an accident than the essence of sacrifice. Its essence is to make oneself an offering to God ; and it is quite conceivable that there might be a nature and a life so adjusted that the giving of the oblation should be as entirely pleasurable as the activities of Mr. Spencer's Paradise. That it will not be so for any of us is due to the existing conditions of this mortal life. We are to look for suffering, and to take it with patience and thankfulness, and even with a sort of pride and triumph, if we can emulate the more heroic Christians, when it comes ; but it is not our duty to create it for ourselves. Or, if we are to inflict suffering upon ourselves, it must not be with any notion of winning favour with God ; voluntary suffering is only acceptable to God when we can use it as a means of helping others or of subduing rebellion in ourselves. What the Gospel lays down for us as the principle of self-sacrifice is, that we should present ourselves to God ;

that we should make our life, from the heart outwards to every organ and function, a gift to God, that he may do with it what he will. Sacrifice, therefore, strictly implies a Being to whom the surrender is to be made; and to talk of sacrifice, or self-sacrifice, when the existence of any such Being is ignored, is to leave it mutilated or unmeaning. It was the essence of the sacrifice of Jesus that he gave himself to his Father; and whenever we, the followers of Jesus, speak of sacrifice, we ought to bring before our minds the name and the character of the Father to whom we also, in the spirit and power of our Head, desire to offer ourselves.

That there will be suffering in the self-surrender we take for granted. And they who look to Jesus will rather welcome it than shrink from it. There is no symptom in St. Paul of any desire to torment or disable himself; but if, as he says, he gloried in tribulation, we may infer that he almost courted it. He certainly believed that the sufferings which fell to his lot had a precious power to bring him nearer to Christ, and to make him a more effective comforter to his brethren. We admit, therefore, that a halo

is thrown around suffering in the New Testament; and that when we speak of sacrifice, we habitually imply suffering, not only on account of the resistance offered by self to the suppression of self—a resistance which is not to be overcome without pain—but because we think of the various troubles and sorrows which we cannot evade, and which must be accepted and borne with patience by those who offer themselves to the Father. But, by the very act of sacrifice, and by the faith which prompts it, the sting is taken out of suffering. And it is a part of our faith, a confidence that could only be justified by experience, that suffering may unseal the sources of a deeper joy than would otherwise be possible to our nature. The reiterated declarations of St. Paul, with their echoes in the most serious utterances of thousands of pious sufferers, that when those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator, their sufferings are turned into joy, cannot be without foundation. We all know something of the power of hope to enable men to endure; but we hardly know to what lengths its fortifying influence may go; and whatever

joy of anticipation can be inspired by hope, that the Christian may claim. It was for the joy that was set before him that Jesus himself endured the Cross. He saw of the travail of his soul, and even at the time of the travailing he was satisfied. The Cross, therefore, if it denotes suffering, may justly be said to connote joy; and the joy is of a quality by the side of which the enjoyment of pleasurable activity is but as candlelight to starlight. Luther, in two of his theses, opposes to those who cry "Peace, peace," and there is no peace, the truer prophets who cry, "The Cross, the Cross," and there is no Cross. And in an earlier letter he explains what he means: "The man who has peace is not he whom no man disturbs; that is the peace of the world; but he whom all men and all things disturb, and who bears all quietly and with joy. Thou art saying with Israel, 'Peace, peace,' and there is no peace: say rather with Christ, 'The Cross, the Cross,' and there is no Cross. For the Cross at once ceases to be the Cross, as soon as you have joyfully exclaimed, 'Crux benedicta, inter ligna nulum tale!'"

Which of the two gospels comes home

with most power to the common human experience—that which promises a gradual diminution of all that annoys or gives pain, with the loss of all that pain and patience can do for the raising and purifying of the human spirit, and bids men fix their thoughts and aspirations on comfort and pleasure ; or that which interprets suffering as Fatherly chastening, and promises peace and joy and fruitfulness to them that endure, and bids them fix their thoughts and aspirations on him who humbled himself and was exalted, and who calls to him the weary and heavy-laden that he may give them rest ? A slow secular improvement of outward conditions, though we need not despise it, interests and awakens us less, pays less honour to our spiritual nature, than the discovery of eternal conditions underlying those of time, the prospect of a joy not of earth crowning the earthly struggle. Let us not seek to rid ourselves of self-denial, of troublesome sympathy with the griefs of others, of vigorous effort to subordinate ease and comfort to the demands of the heavenly calling. Let us deem it worthy of our humanity, which has hope and fear, love and joy, for its sign and note and

character, to accept a temporary discipline of conflict and endurance in view of the glory to be revealed. Let us be content to suffer hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Let us listen with hope, as our fathers have done, to the voice of Duty :—

“ He that ever following her commands,  
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
Through the long gorge to the far light has won  
His way upward, and prevailed,  
Shall find the toppling crags of duty scaled  
Are close upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God himself is moon and sun.”

Not less, when we think of the social body first, and of individuals as limbs of it, do we find in Christ the true Object towards which the conscious purpose of social development is to strain. The law of perfected humanity, as the Gospel sets it forth, is that all men together should be trained to look up through Christ, their common Head, to the Father of all, and so be bound each to each in a vast complex harmony. The Gospel does not ignore the single man's personal existence and distinct responsibility; but it subordinates the one man to the many, and teaches that the individual will know and find himself most



completely by referring himself both to his Head and to his fellow-members.

There is no question, under the Christian scheme, of a competition or balance or compromise between the interest of the individual and the claim of the body, between the fullness of personal life and absorption into the corporate existence of the whole. The New Testament theory is simple and intelligible ; and, if only the truth which the Bible declares—God's care for mankind—be accepted as a postulate, nothing can be more real or natural. The concern of a man for his fellows is rooted in his devotion to God, his service to them is bound up with his service to God. We cannot deny that we are often troubled by a conflict of apparently competing obligations ; but the obligations which seem to jostle and hinder one another are those by which we are bound to our fellows. There is no conflict between duty to our God and duty to our neighbour. We admit, indeed, that Christians as well as men of other religions have often, as a matter of fact, been disloyal to humanity through devotion to their God ; but that is because their God has been one of their own imagina-

tion, not the God of the New Testament in his purity, not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Think of that saying, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life," and then conceive, if you can, any more constraining motive of service to our fellow-men than complete loyalty to Christ. We are subject to two great commandments, but each of them is no rival to the other; the second is sustained and more than covered by the first, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength." What margin, it might be asked, is left for any other love? We answer, none; but none is needed; for he that loves the Father will necessarily love his brother also.

When the exponents of the evolution system of morals measure their egoism against their altruism, and their altruism against their egoism, their main conclusion is, as it must be, that altruism is subservient to egoism. They can demonstrate that it greatly contributes to a man's own happiness that he should be kindly and gracious to those about him. Gross selfishness in any one makes his neighbours dislike him, and

their dislike cannot but be disagreeable to him, and therefore it is good policy to be the sort of man whom his neighbours will like. That we can quite understand; and we can further see that it is not necessary or desirable that, when a man is showing himself kindly, he should have it distinctly present to his consciousness that such conduct will promote his own pleasure. It will be better that that idea should be latent in his mind. But it is also urged that egoism, besides its own first-hand satisfactions, may minister to the altruism from which it will receive again secondary and perhaps deeper satisfactions. Who is so agreeable a member of society, it is asked, as the man who is cheerful and good-humoured because he has been prudently careful of his bodily and mental well-being? By attending to his own happiness a man keeps himself in good spirits; he thus makes himself pleasant to those about him, and so contributes to their happiness, whilst their enjoyment of his good spirits in return makes him the happier. Here is a justification, from the social point of view, of the egoism which nature inevitably breeds in the individual. What are we to say to this plea for egoism?

We reply that actions are discriminated in the sight of God, or in reality, by their motives. If any one takes care of his health in order that he may be more serviceable to his generation, or that he may please his neighbour for his good to the building up of the social body, his care of himself may be as unselfish as any direct performance of a kindness to another. And we ought to thank those who suggest this reflection to us for pointing out how much loss society incurs through inconsiderate wasting of powers. Let it be admitted that the habit of cherishing high unselfish aims may easily make any one impatient of the due attention to the needs of his own life. What we want is, that self-regarding prudence should be enjoined and enforced in the name of the welfare of others. Such an appeal is not unfamiliar ; and it has much more effect, with the low-minded as well as the high-minded, than endeavours to stimulate self-regard by prediction of consequences which will affect the man himself. It is common for a commander to repress the instinct that would hurry him into the thick of an engagement from the conscientious feeling that his life is too important to be

thus risked ; for a father to be more careful of his health and his safety than he was before his marriage, because he reflects that illness or death would be so great a misfortune to his family. There is good reason for urging upon young men that their health and strength are not things with which they have a right to play ; that, if they injure themselves either in seeking pleasure with youthful recklessness, or, in working too hard and neglecting or punishing the body with youthful enthusiasm, let us not say, they will be lessening the sum of their own enjoyment of life, but they may be depriving their fellow-men of services which their God is demanding at their hands. See how common duties and necessities are transfigured when they are thus brought into the light of the true social aim ! There is nothing really extravagant in the Christian precept, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God ;" it is founded on the solid basis of truth and experience. The Christian self-surrender will effectively cover all self-regarding as well as other-regarding habits. He who strives to present his body an offering to

God will naturally desire that the offering shall be as good as he can make it; and he will know that his worth to God will be measured, at least in great part, perhaps absolutely, by the humble aid that he can give in building up the body of Christ.

If there is any practical truth in the allegation so continually made by disciples of Comte, that Christians in accordance with their creed divert their attention from the serving of their fellow-men to the worship of a remote God, and to the pursuit of solitary happiness in a future life, let us be sure that it is not the fault of our creed that we are liable to this reproach. We may appeal against this distortion of our creed to injunctions of their own master, which they are too loyal to disobey. He bade them feed their spiritual life upon the Confessions of St. Augustine and the "*Imitatio Christi*," not to say upon the New Testament itself. What can induce those with whom the rejection of theology is a fundamental principle thus to immerse themselves in theological meditations? The Positivists explain that they can use our books of devotion with profit by drinking in their religious spirit and substituting in their



own minds the name of humanity for that of God and Christ. We also foster our devotion to humanity by the use of the same aids, but more simply and straightforwardly, because to us humanity is *included* in Christ and in God. If we do not worship a humanity without Christ, neither do we worship a Christ separate from humanity. The Christ whom we confess and follow, and towards whom we yearn and strive, is the Head, not of Christians only, but of all men. We are bidden to honour all men, not because all are worthy, but because they all are brethren of the Son of man. We distrust our power, selfish competitive creatures as we are, to love our neighbour unless we first love God; and the only love we can possibly have towards God is that which is called out in us by his grace and kindness towards all men. Nearer approach to Christ means growth in love of the brethren. Love is the fulfilling of the law which the Heavenly Creator has imposed upon his creatures. And herein—may we not admit?—is that hard saying true, that the sense of duty will tend to disappear with more complete moralisation. Christians, as they understand their calling better and fix their eyes more



devoutly on Christ, and are drawn nearer to him, will perform their social parts with less self-coercion and more ease and joy. Their appointed life will become more natural and spontaneous to them. They will not willingly remain in debt to a fellow-man for any practicable service unperformed, nor will they pay it reluctantly under compulsion. But they will not get rid, or wish to get rid, of the comprehensive obligation by which God's grace has eternally bound them. They will rejoice in the burden of a debt which, however they may pay, they will never pay off, the duty to love one another.

### III.

## JUSTICE AND FAITH.

(Preached before the University of Oxford, 27th April 1884.)

“Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid, nay, we establish the law.”—ROMANS iii. 31.

A CHRISTIAN who would compare the principles of Christian morality with those of a morality founded on any other basis than that of our relation to God finds himself confronted with a doctrine, claiming the authority of St. Paul, which seems to set at naught all rules of conduct and all deliberate discipline of life, and entirely to annul systematic morality: I mean the doctrine that man's righteousness is not of works but of faith. “Let a man believe,” says this doctrine, “and he is righteous; he has by means of his faith a righteousness not his own. In no other way can a man be righteous; to build up a righteousness of works is hopeless and impossible.” But

morality has to do with works, with conduct, with aims and rules which are right not for some particular men only but for men as men. It is not surprising, therefore, that those who have thoroughly accepted the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith have often disparaged morality as worthless, and have even shown a still stronger unfriendliness towards it. The pursuit of virtue has been regarded as having a tendency to seduce men dangerously from the only true hope of acceptance with God. Students who had first been nourished on St. Paul, and who have afterwards been introduced to Aristotle and Butler, have said to themselves that human systems of ethics, even those which place conscience above experience or utility, belong to the region of what St. Paul termed the law and works, and are put aside as of no avail by the Gospel of justification by faith.

The doctrine is one which no Christian can leave out of account. It holds too large a place in the New Testament, and is too earnestly maintained by the founder of Gentile Christianity, to be neglected as if it were merely incidental. It has been proved, moreover, that this doctrine had more than a

temporary or local importance. It has had power in other ages as well as in the first age. It expressed to the mind of Luther the truth which lay at the root of the German Reformation. If there ever was a theologian who brought his theological beliefs to the test of inward experience and of their influence on life, it was Luther; and to him the doctrine of justification by faith was *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. It would be shallow criticism, in any historical investigation of morality, to dispose of a belief which was held vital by men like St. Paul and Luther as being one of the unaccountable eccentricities of fanaticism. If indeed the Pauline doctrine were irreconcilable with the Sermon on the Mount, or if it really encouraged men to be careless and immoral in their lives, we should have no alternative but to repudiate it, with whatever respectful regret. But the most superficial reading of St. Paul's Epistles is enough to show that, logically or not, he was heartily in sympathy with the morality of the Gospels, and with all good morality of whatever origin; and though it is easy to draw what are known as Antinomian inferences from some of St. Paul's statements, and such

inferences have been in fact drawn and put into practice, to no one have those inferences been more repulsive than to the true lovers and preachers of the doctrine. The Christian moralist is urgently bound, therefore, to take account of St. Paul's teaching concerning righteousness as coming of faith; and he has a strong interest in reconciling it, if he can, with the principles of a comprehensive and broadly human morality.

It is implied in that use of the two words, righteousness and justification, which is necessarily made in any rendering or discussion of St. Paul's doctrine, that righteousness and justice are synonymous terms. There is only a single Greek equivalent for the two, which are in fact the Teutonic and Latin translations of the same word. It is a well-known disadvantage for the English reader of St. Paul that we have no word which is to righteous as justify is to just. It has been a question for our translators whether, as they were almost obliged to use justify and justification, they should not also use just and justice rather than righteous and righteousness. But the makers both of the Authorised and the Revised Versions have

preferred to keep the latter words : for the most part, that is, though not with entire consistency ; for they have, “not the hearers of a law are *just* before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified ;” and, “that he might himself be *just*, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.” We are led to ask, therefore, whether there is any difference between what we understand by righteousness and what we understand by justice, being bound to bear in mind that in Greek and in St. Paul’s writings there is but the one word for the two. We might perhaps borrow a familiar phrase, and say that righteousness is justice “touched with emotion.” Or, to give a more prosaic explanation, we might say that the circumstance of there being two words available for use having suggested some differentiation between them, justice has come to be associated with the definitions of human law and with those arrangements and transactions which can be enforced by legal penalties, whilst righteousness brings in the thought of the Divine Law and therefore of principles and motives. In common language righteousness is deeper, larger, more living ; justice more superficial, narrower, more

legal. We should generally be right in assuming that justice belongs to morality, righteousness to religion. And the morality which takes external conduct for its matter will naturally speak by preference of justice. But when we are considering the relation of St. Paul's doctrine to common morality, we must remember that, however it may be expedient to translate him, he also was speaking of justice, and was adopting what was the ordinary phraseology of morals and of law in his time.

St. Paul, then, in his doctrine of justification by faith, is concerned about righteousness or justice. And the author of *St. Paul and Protestantism* is manifestly right in contending that, so far from being indifferent to practical morality, the apostle was chiefly moved by an anxiety in behalf of such morality. The righteousness or justice of which he speaks is not mere exemption from liability to punishment; it is a quality or relation from which right conduct will naturally issue. He desires that men may be righteous, not in being accounted different from what they are, but in truth and in power. His quarrel with the law was that, under it,



men failed, manifestly and hopelessly, to attain to that righteousness which the law enjoined. His mind was set on a righteousness which was not indeed merely external, but which, being inward, would inevitably find expression in conduct. What then was this righteousness or justice on which his mind was set ?

Moralists and jurists have found it no easy task to define justice. It enters so largely into the simplest and most universal conceptions about the relations of man to man, that we are hardly prepared to find it so elusive as it is both in its essential nature and in a multitude of its applications. The latest philosophy of our own day can hardly claim to be more at ease or more successful in giving an account of it than that of former ages. What do men mean when they say that such or such an arrangement is just, that such or such an act is demanded by justice ? What is the adequate explanation of that reverent and tenacious faith in justice, of that acknowledgment of its authority over men, which is seen germinating in the most primitive stages of society, and which grows with the growth of civilisation ? I think it will be allowed that when these questions have been answered

most confidently the answers have proved least able to bear a searching investigation. It is obvious that legal enactments in general, and all popular notions of justice, assume that there are certain rights belonging to individuals or to societies which are to be respected and protected, and the infringement of which constitutes a wrong. It is obvious, again, that equality often seems to constitute justice, so that equal has become a kind of synonym of just. But it is scarcely less obvious that equality does not go very far in accounting for the arrangements which we qualify as just, or for the sentiment with which men regard what they believe to be just. And though rights belonging to individuals and societies are very convenient assumptions of law, it is easily seen to be more rational to regard them as assigned by common consent, than as so inhering originally in the individual or the society that they can be treated as the natural basis of what men recognise as justice. The natural rights alleged to be inherent in persons are almost evidently the product of the existing relations or conventions of which they are supposed to be the ground. It can scarcely be pretended that they reside in the

consciousness or are claimed instinctively by every man. The tendency of the higher morality is to assert no claims, to disavow rights. We understand rights far better when we think of them as assigned by common consent. But how does the common consent obtain them? The assignment may be suggested, as a matter of fact, by the experience of what is advantageous for the community; it is probable that this experience chiefly decides with what rights individuals or corporations should be endowed. But if justice meant nothing more than that, it might properly be called the will of the stronger, of the ruling majority, and the justice which all men reverence as something higher than the will of the stronger would have disappeared. That sympathy has had a great deal to do with the development of the sentiment of justice will be universally admitted; it is by identifying ourselves with others, by the one putting himself in the place of the other, that we obtain a lively sense of the claims of our neighbours and become interested in the fulfilment of those claims. But the justice to which sympathy awakens us must not be assumed to be completely

explained by the sympathy which makes us alive to it.

If philosophy fails to give a satisfactory explanation of justice or righteousness, we do not violate the maxim, "*nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus*," by asking whether the acknowledgment of a living God has not been more successful in discovering the true ground of it. St. Paul was a theologian to the furthest point; to him Christ was all and in all: did he also understand the laws of human conduct, and does his conception of righteousness explain what we all have more or less clearly in view when we speak of justice?

We observe that St. Paul, like his Hebrew fathers, speaks boldly of the righteousness of God. And he not only implies that there is some likeness between the righteousness of God and righteousness in men, but he is very emphatic in declaring that the only righteousness is that of God, and that man can have none of his own but only that which is God's. It is evident that the ordinary ethical speculations about human justice do not easily accommodate themselves to the idea of a Divine righteousness. To the

non-theistic philosopher this idea presents no difficulty ; he can quickly get rid of it as an example of the anthropomorphic tendency. Justice was admired in a man, and therefore it was attributed to the imaginary greater man who was called a God. If it was the glory of Moses to be just, it was a matter of course that Jehovah should be described as just also, whatever incongruities justice in a supreme God might involve. So long, indeed, as the righteousness of God means no more than that he distributes punishments and rewards justly, the idea of Divine righteousness may occasion no perplexity. The difficulty attending such a conception lies not in the conception itself, but in seeing that the Divine rewards and punishments are actually such as infallible justice would apportion. By that difficulty the minds of men have always been exercised, as they have contemplated the course of things in the world, and observed how often the good things go to the wicked and the evil things to the good ; and they have found some relief in assuming that the course of things is subject to a non-moral Fate with which the Divine action can only partially interfere.

But St. Paul's God was very different from a powerful Being who by partial interference could modify the course of things; and his reverence for the Divine righteousness, as controlling the world and underlying all human righteousness, was more than a confidence that every man would ultimately be rewarded according to his deeds.

Confessing God with St. Paul as the Being from whom and through whom and unto whom are all things, we may see his righteousness manifested in the *order* according to which he creates the world, and which is sustained by him against the influences which produce disorder. This appears to be the Scriptural idea of God as a righteous Being,—that he is a God of order. The mind of the devout Israelite is comforted by the contemplation of the order of the natural world, as he watches the constant regularity of the stars in the heaven and sees how the phenomena of the earth fulfil the word of the Creator, because he recognises in this subjection of physical things to law a symbol and a witness of that higher order according to which the moral world is established. The living God with whom men have to do is

righteous, is a Being in whom they may trust, insomuch as the order of the universe is his work, and he is pledged to sustain it.

When we speak of the order of the social or human world, we mean the various relations in which men are bound to each other. If we believe with St. Paul, we ascribe these to the Divine Creator. We do not ascribe them any the less to God, because they may be shown to have been developed under the pressure of circumstances with the progress of civilisation. It is God who has planted men on the earth, and combined them in families and households, in tribes and in nations. It is he whose never-resting energy is seen in the urgent stress of life, in the impulses of growth. Whatever builds up societies of men is of God. To recognise the relations of human beings to each other as having authority, and to feel that they ought to be duly fulfilled, belongs to the rudimentary sentiment of justice. To do justly is to satisfy claims; and the claims which an individual has upon others do not inhere in himself, are not such as he can call his own, but they are assigned to him and put to his credit by the relations in which



the Maker has bound him to his fellow-men. The sentiment of justice, therefore, we interpret as reverence for the Divine order. It must be allowed to be natural that the relations in which the Maker has constituted us should have authority to our minds and consciences. What the relations are, and how they are to be fulfilled, it is appointed to us to learn by observation and reflection and trial. Men's ideas of what is just are intended to grow, and they may often, and especially after intervals of time, need correction. But the sense that we did not make and are not making ourselves; that a Divine Power sends us into the world and ties us to the fellow-men with whom we have to do; and that it is not of our choice to settle how we shall act towards those to whom we are bound,—this it is which enters into all men's deference to the authority of justice, and this is the groundwork of the righteous character.

It is true that in our ordinary use of the word justice we have in view for the most part something humbler and more limited than the due fulfilment of all relations. We are generally thinking of acts which may be enforced by law, and of such breaches of

relations as will incur legal penalties. It is a part of the Maker's righteousness that his creatures should do something by means of punishments to protect the relations which he has ordained ; and it is the truest view of punishment to regard it as inflicted in the Maker's name. But the justice that can be thus enforced is of the coarser and more external kind, the kind which catches the attention most, that is most easily talked about. At the same time it is well understood that there are real claims which even those who would make most use of the law would not think of protecting by means of legal penalties ; and any study of what is just is sure to result in enlarging and elevating the sphere of justice. Take that relation of man and wife which St. Paul has done so much to exalt. The fulfilment of it is partly sustained by law ; but the law can only deal with outward action ; and every one feels that the dues which the law can compel the husband or the wife to render form but an inferior portion of what may be defined as conjugal justice. Those who reflect on that relation from the Pauline point of view, as having a Divine sanction and ground, will

recognise that God assigns to each partner claims on the other, or what we call rights, which he will sustain by his own Divine rewards and punishments, but which are too spiritual for human law to handle. So it is with all the other relations of the social system. "Render to all their dues," says St. Paul ; "tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour." Tribute and custom may be extorted from those who refuse or neglect to render them ; but fear and honour, however due, may be withheld against any compulsion of law or despot, and belong to that sphere of the conscience and the affections into which coercive law does not presume to enter.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord : for this is just." In the parallel part of the twin Epistle to the Colossians the exhortation is thus varied, "Children, obey your parents in all things : for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." The variation illustrates what St. Paul understood by righteousness or justice. Parents, he held, had in the nature of things, or by the appointment of the Creator, a claim on the obedience of their

children. The claim was grounded not on anything that could inhere in the parents, but on the actual relation to their parents in which children found themselves. The kind and degree of obedience to be rendered would be learnt from an experiential study of the relation. But children who believed in a living and creative God would acknowledge the relation, with all its varying phases, as proceeding from the will and word of God. And therefore the claim which the relation conferred on the parent was sustained by Divine authority ; and the statement, "this is just," might for believers be translated into the statement, "this is well-pleasing to the Lord." When we speak, as all do, of the claims of children on their parents and of parents on their children, or of filial and parental rights which are partly under the protection of the law but which also manifestly transcend the sphere of penal law, are there any purely ethical interpretations of justice which account for our language and satisfy our minds so well as that theological interpretation which we learn from St. Paul and the Bible ?

Righteousness in the person, the just mind

or character, will be the disposition which regards the prescriptions of justice with reverence and sets itself to fulfil loyally the relations which confer claims or rights, and which will be offended by acts violating those relations. There are various degrees of elevation in the just character. There is the man who is scrupulous about not violating the law, but who hardly thinks of any claims beyond those which the penal law recognises and enforces. There is another who takes social opinion into account, and is careful not only to avoid any wrong-doing which the law would punish, but to meet claims which the law would not compel him to satisfy, and to win the reputation amongst his neighbours of being considerably just in all his dealings. And there is a third whose mind is not set upon the law or social opinion, but on the claims themselves, who sees behind these claims an authority appealing to his conscience, and who is anxious to fulfil, to the best of his power, all the relations in which he finds himself placed. This last is the genuinely righteous man; and of him we should say, as Christians, that he is intent upon the Divine order and the will or word

which establishes it, and is responding or submitting himself with all his heart to the Divine righteousness. Even if he does not name a God as framing the order, the consciousness of the genuinely righteous man will be that of responding, of conforming himself, of yielding willingly to an authority, of finding out in a docile spirit the obligations which he is to discharge, not of making an independent choice for himself and doing as he pleases. His ideal will be attained if he is—so to speak—absorbed into the high social order to which he surrenders himself, and becomes a living part of it. Then the righteousness of the Creator will be fulfilled in him.

In giving such an account of the genuinely righteous man we are evidently approaching what St. Paul taught as to the dependence of righteousness upon faith. His doctrine, as the history of the Church has shown, is liable to misconstruction. He was not careful to guard his language from misconstruction, but spoke freely and boldly, as his Master had done before him. "A man is justified by faith," he declared, "apart from works of the law." "Faith was reckoned to

Abraham for righteousness. And it will be reckoned to us also, who believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ; who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification." But before we come to these statements in the Epistle from which they are taken, we have read others which must be in some way compatible with them. The Apostle who affirms that we are justified by faith and not by works has also said, not elsewhere or at another time, but in the very same writing and not many lines above, "God will render to every man according to his works : wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil ; but glory and honour and peace to every man that worketh good : for not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified." Has it not been idle to fetch passages from another Apostle to contradict St. Paul, when he can be thus shown to be contradicting himself more saliently than St. James contradicts him ? These apparent contradictions should lead us to a deeper and truer understanding of the conflicting statements. In making both, in



asserting that to work was everything and that to believe was everything, St. Paul had the same class of persons in view. He was looking at Jews and Judaising Christians, people who to those who desired to be righteous presented the law, pointing to the law as containing the decrees which Jehovah had thought fit to promulgate, and teaching that it was by a scrupulous observance of these decrees that men might win God's favour and be right with him. Now what St. Paul had observed was that these Jews who were zealous for the law did not become actually righteous, were not fruitful in good works; and the lesson that he learnt from observation was stamped upon his mind with tenfold force by his own personal experience. He came to the conclusion that the way to righteousness was not through scrupulous observance of decrees; that the attempt to attain to genuine righteousness, to a living and fruitful justice or morality, by means of such observance, was a failure. He would hardly perhaps have seen this so clearly if another way had not been shown him. Jesus Christ had been manifested to him: in the Son of God, crucified and raised from the

dead, he saw the essential nature of the ruling God revealed to men. God might now be known as seeking men with Fatherly good-will, forgiving them their sins, calling them to himself, pouring into their hearts the Spirit of his Son. To respond to this appeal of the Gospel, to come to God, accepting his grace, admitting the mind of sonship, consenting to live with him in his home, was found by experience to be the way to become truly righteous. By degrees the whole meaning of this discovery revealed itself with overwhelming power to the Apostle's mind. He saw what was the right state for man. If there was a right state, then a man was naturally ill at ease and unsuccessful whilst he was in any wrong state. Jesus Christ and the Gospel had made it clear what the right state was. It was that of filial response to God, looked up to as a living and perfect Father. In a single word, the state might be called that of faith. St. Paul saw all this in the vivid light of the new Christian life, contrasted with the heartlessness, the formalism, and the vice which surrounded it. A man to whom God was convincingly revealed as perfectly just and

true, perfectly gracious, inviting the most miserable sinner to throw himself upon his righteousness and grace and to live in trustful happy communion with him, knew not only by an inward feeling but by the test of his everyday life, that in proportion as he could abide in the state of sonship or faith all was right with him. He was put in the right way, and had only to keep it. Light shone upon his path, hope leapt in his veins, his neighbours were transformed into brothers, unselfish conduct became natural. Did St. Paul then persuade himself that he and his fellow-believers were perfectly happy, perfectly good, that for them all effort had become needless, and that they had nothing to do but to resign themselves to the delights and security of their position? It is evident that he was not for a moment under any such delusion. He never held that it was guaranteed to him and other Christians that they should at all times perfectly believe. If faith could be entirely dominant in the heart of a Christian, then, indeed, for him the ideal would be attained, the perfect condition would be realised. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had been a living example

of faith raised to its supreme power ; and it was the privilege of Christians, the hope held out to them, to be always drawing nearer and nearer to Christ : but the faith of God's sinful children was at the best always imperfect, continually failing. And, if watchfulness and effort were not to be applied to the winning of an independent righteousness, they were still needed for the preserving of faith. It might be found that a systematic regulation of life was beneficial, that the discipline of a vigilant self-control could not be dispensed with ; certainly the Divine discipline would continue to warn and check and discomfit the careless or wilful offender : but the conscious aim of all spiritual effort, if men understood the grace of God and the secret of righteousness, would be to keep near to God ; and the penitent cry of the sinner who had wandered farthest from the way of righteousness would be, " I will arise and go to my Father."

I have contended that order is the keynote of all true explanations of righteousness. God is a righteous Being, insomuch as he produces and sustains an orderly creation ; man is righteous in conforming himself to the

Divine order. The social system in all its stages, so far as it is healthy and progressive, is the order which God makes and develops for his human creatures. But in the kingdom of heaven the highest scale of the Divine order is revealed. Making himself known through Christ, God calls men to be his children in Christ; he shows himself to be a being in whom they can confide, to whom they may come without fear, to whom it is reasonable that they should surrender themselves; he endows them with a heavenly spirit, which is in each the mind of sonship, stirring in the deeps that reach below consciousness the essentially human cry, Abba, Father! To Christians this family relation to God and to each other has become the supreme Divine order. All other stages of order lead up to this and are dominated and interpreted by it. It is the social system of the kingdom of heaven, but of a kingdom revealed and established upon earth. There is nothing so true, we must hold, concerning any set of human beings, nothing so important, as that they are children of the just and gracious God, and brothers one of the other. When a man sees this he knows thenceforth

his place in the creation. In the Father's house there are an infinite number of places for his children ; and each man's place is seeking him and waiting for him till he abides in it. The Divine order is not perfected till all these places are filled. Faith is the occupation of the man's place ; to believe is to be settled at home in the Father's house. And therefore faith is reckoned unto us for righteousness ; not by any fiction, but because the faith really is righteousness, because he who believes, accepting the state and mind of sonship, and submitting himself heart and soul to the Divine order or righteousness, becomes himself righteous, livingly and practically righteous, with a righteousness that is not of himself but of God.

I began by observing that any one who desires to advocate a Christian morality must take account of St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. If we are wise, my Christian brethren, we should not wish to explain that doctrine away, or to show that it means nothing. If it does not mean something vital and permanent, so much the worse for the world. For there never has been such a power for morality as that doctrine. Its

power has depended on its not being a doctrine so much as a Gospel. It would have been of no use to talk of faith and its virtue, unless it had been possible for the ministers of Christ to give such an account of God as would draw men to faith. Faith implies as its correlative one who may be trusted, and therefore one who is sufficiently known to be trusted. St. Paul had been convinced that the Eternal God was a Being of whom Jesus Christ could be the Son, and that he was calling men into peace and fellowship with himself. To bear witness of such a Being was to invite men to believe in him ; and the Gospel, as simple testimony to Christ and the Father, did its saving work without any doctrine of justification by faith. But the doctrine took shape as a warning against that tendency to seek righteousness by obedience to a law which was illustrated to St. Paul by the Jews and Judaisers of his age. So this doctrine has come to be identified with the revelation of the righteousness and grace of God ; and experience, as I have said, has proved that no moralising, no prediction of consequences, no appeal to self-interest, can do so much in persuading men to live



good lives as the manifested righteousness and grace of God. Those who have any sense of the power of this revelation will not doubt that, if what St. Paul meant be rightly apprehended, those conclusions of natural ethics which commend themselves to general acceptance will fall into harmony with it.

On the other hand the recent literature of natural ethics seems to show that there is a real difficulty in finding anything like a scientific basis for the whole theory of justice, such as the recognition of a Divine order supplies. Whilst all men in these days assume justice, and are ready to appeal to it even with passion, there is not only much confusion as to what is actually just, but there is also no agreement amongst scientific thinkers as to what justice means. Is it not the fact, I would ask, that when those who profess in the name of science to comprehend all existence in some universal synthesis come to the enforcement of duty they show themselves at fault, and are compelled to fall back upon instincts and conventions, and to leave their science behind them? Appealing, sometimes, with not less vehemence than the unscientific, to standards and

ideals which the general conscience recognises, but which their science does not know, they enter into an honourable rivalry of moral enthusiasm with those who know in whom they have believed. Nature gave them no firm ground on which to plant their feet in the struggle for right against wrong. Where—we must persist in inquiring—does the science which observes and deduces, and explains all things by laws of nature, find place for reverence and for blame? Why should justice be invoked as having manifest authority over all men; why should it awake so much emotion as it does in the nobler class of human souls? Let any scientific answer to these questions be compared with the conclusions which Hooker has expressed in his majestic sentences: “Of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power: both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, ad-

miring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

These principles—that there is a Divine righteousness which is to be seen in the making and sustaining of the varied living order of the universe, and that man's righteousness consists in finding out and conforming himself to the righteousness of God—are not offered as providing ready solutions for all questions that may arise as to what is just. It is our lot to be increasingly perplexed in these days by questions of this kind. Cool observers are constantly irritated by appeals to elemental conceptions of justice which seem to them only to confuse the matter in hand. You may find an illustration in the question of the right to own land. Those who are on the side of possession protest that it is palpably unjust to take away from any persons what actually belongs to them, at all events without reasonable compensation; but that protest is met by a vehement declaration that it is primarily and incurably unjust that any persons other than the whole community should own what manifestly belongs to the community. And it is this appeal to eternal

and immutable justice that excites the enthusiasm of those who attack existing possession. Other indignant protests of a kindred nature may be heard. "It is a wrong that rich men should have, to waste in luxury, what poor men want for the necessities of their children's lives;" "it is a wrong that the capitalist employer should take what the labourer has produced." These are the persuasions by which men's minds are set on fire, far more than by simple covetousness; and it is the sacred name of justice that gives them their power. Or take another class of questions—those relating to what are called "women's rights." The word "rights" of itself implies an appeal to justice. "Is it just that votes should be withheld from women?" "Is it just that they should be excluded from the educational advantages appropriated by men?" Ask rather, many would be inclined to answer, whether it is expedient. But as social ideas become more thoroughly *moralised*—to use a term of recent philosophies—it is certain that appeals to justice on such questions will be made with increased urgency. The belief that to follow after

justice is to aim at the due fulfilment of the social relations which God ordains will not enable us to say at once, "This is just ; this is unjust." But it will put us—may I not say ?—on the right path and in the right temper for dealing with such problems. We confess that the way to learn what is just, that is, what is the true Divine order for the time and circumstances, is to a large extent to inquire what is expedient. And, as Christians, we shall always keep reverently in mind that highest order which determines our relations to God and to each other in the Divine family.

Of this order, as we have seen, faith is the law. We are called to be entirely dependent upon the will and action of God ; self-dependence is the state out of which we are called. Yet the faith, the dependence, the self-surrender, may actually demand and cherish what is called from another point of view self-dependence or independence. When self-dependence is advocated, it is in contrast with dependence upon persons near us, upon social authority, upon the State. And there is nothing in the doctrine of faith which bids a man lean blindly on other men.

When that doctrine was first preached, it called upon men to stand upon convictions of their own, and to follow them out into practice, at the cost of separating themselves with a marked and painful independence from the society to which they belonged. There is nothing like faith in truth, in righteousness, in God, for enabling a man to be independent. Christianity may equally be invoked in support of a true individualism and a true socialism. The Christian is essentially a member of a body, bound to subordinate himself to the general well-being ; but he can only serve the body by a loyal allegiance to the Head : and one who believes in God can never be content to take his ultimate directions from his fellow-men. The Christian doctrine would nourish a high-minded personal independence, as the best means of promoting social unity and growth.

Let our last thought be given to the affinity between righteousness and love. To distinguish radically between justice and benevolence is a well-known difficulty of ethics. The two laws, the two qualities, seem to run into one another. It is rightly said that each disposition, the just and the

benevolent, has found its actual nourishment in the instinct of sympathy. Is justice made perfect, until it is lost in love? Can love find any methods, any channels, but those which justice points out? We call it righteousness or justice to satisfy all claims, to render to all their dues; but St. Paul himself lays it down that "love is the fulfilling of the law." And our Lord has taught us that all the law is contained in the two commandments—Thou shalt love God, Thou shalt love thy neighbour. It may be enough, perhaps, to distinguish in this way: we are just, in respect of our paying homage to the Divine order—but love goes straight to its objects, God and man. We think of God as ordering his world out of love and for the sake of love; so that his righteousness is secondary to his love. Let order be secondary to its ends; let justice be consciously and contentedly the subordinate and minister of love. We can hardly look forward to a time when the Divine order shall not be a guide of our action and an object of reverence to our souls; but if love can ever dispense with righteousness, then let love be supreme and alone.



#### IV.

### THE TWO COMMANDMENTS: THE LESS CONTAINED IN THE GREATER.

(Preached at Christ Church, St. Marylebone, 14th July 1878.)

“All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do ye also unto them.”

MATTHEW vii. 12.

THESE are old familiar words. We learn from our infancy to say, “My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me.” All Christians accept this as an elementary and fundamental maxim of their religion. But not only are these words not new to ourselves in this age of Christendom; they were by no means altogether new to the world when our Lord spoke them. Parallels to them can be found in heathen philosophers, in the sacred books of other religions. The maxim may justly be regarded

as human and universal, rather than as specifically Christian.

Our Lord, as we are reminded by this saying, was not a teacher who affected novelty of phrase. To us he is, in a true sense, the most original of teachers. One of the first impressions his teaching made upon those who heard it fresh from his lips was that he taught with authority, and not as the scribes—not like men who retailed a traditional morality, but as one whose lessons came direct from the fountain of truth and order. But we fall into an error when we imagine that we ought to be jealous for the novelty of all those lessons. It would seem that our Lord preferred, on the contrary, to throw his doctrine into forms of speech already current among the people. The old sacred language of the Jews was sacred to him also. He spoke to his fellow-countrymen as the Son of their own God. He did not desire to appear a stranger to them; he was glad to use the images and the proverbs which belonged to the common stock of their popular language. Attempts have been made by persons unfavourable to Christianity to show that the characteristic precepts of the Gospels are not

so exclusively original as they have been supposed to be ; and the attempts have had some undeniable success. Let us not be disturbed by any such demonstrations. It was natural that the Son and Word of God should use language which the Spirit of God had already suggested to men. Christians ought to show no jealousy in appreciating what has been true and good in the apprehensions of men previous to and apart from the direct teaching of Christ.

Our recognition of the authority of Christ's teaching depends upon its proving itself to be true and profound to the farthest limits of our insight and aspirations. If in the course of history and of our experience we became convinced that it was really superficial and local in its character—if it could be alleged that we have advanced beyond it and have discovered principles which deal more effectually with the circumstances of our lives, and which commend themselves with more authority to our hearts and consciences than those which we have learnt from Christ—it would be necessary that his teaching should be deposed from the rank which has been claimed for it. But that—need I say?—is

not yet our conviction. Each time that we turn to the Gospels we find ourselves awed, commanded, moved, as by no other morality. We know nothing deeper, nothing more universal, nothing more practical, than the laws of human conduct which our Lord clothed in language intelligible and impressive to his Galilean hearers. The Gospel morality needs no championship, it only wants to be understood and felt. It has much that is manifestly higher than what human wisdom unenlightened by the Gospel has ever suggested; but it also welcomes and justifies and exalts every good idea which has appeared to be independent of it.

The principle that we should do to others what we should wish them to do to us is one of those which may be found elsewhere than in the New Testament, but it is there affirmed with emphatic authority, and the Christian Church has accepted it as a rule of practical life. In thus accepting it there are two qualifying considerations which it is well, I think, to bear in mind.

1. Like other general precepts, it will not bear to be taken slavishly in the letter. The worth of a precept is much rather to suggest

a temper or attitude of mind than to determine precisely what in a given case ought to be done. It is a superficial and therefore a bad morality—I mean, not merely defective, but unwholesome and misleading—that attempts to prescribe for conduct by precise regulations. Human life is too free and various to be governed by such methods. You may imagine cases, without any great ingenuity, in which it would be undesirable and wrong to carry out literally our Lord's injunction, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." For example, one of us might like very much to be indulged and made much of and flattered. That kind of treatment, applied skilfully, can scarcely fail to be agreeable to many. Ought we then in this matter to do to others what we might like them to do to us? Ought we to indulge and flatter? Clearly not. We must not be insincere; and we must not please our neighbour to his injury. The Apostle's exhortation is the wise one, "Let every one of us please his neighbour *for his good to edification.*" Again, suppose one man to entertain a strong feeling of dislike to another, say to hate him. Would it please the hater that

the hated should begin to bless him and pray for him, to pour coals of fire on his head? I can imagine few things that would displease him more. The hater is almost compelled to wish that the hated may justify his ill-will by behaving in an offensive and hostile manner. He is not therefore called upon by Christian morality to behave to his enemy as he would like his enemy to behave to him. I give these illustrations to show that the precept is not to be taken as if its letter were always absolutely authoritative. It is intended to be read freely and spiritually, as setting forth a right temper and relation of mind between fellow-men.

2. The other consideration is a more important one. The precept is not to be taken as if it set forth the whole duty of man. It is not affirmed to be the sole basis even of the morality which belongs to a man's dealings with his neighbour.

It has been alleged that this precept falls short, as a rule of morality, of what the inspiring principle of a good man's life ought to be, and of what the best men, in their better moments, have really aimed at. It puts, to a man's heart and conscience, his

fellow-men only on the same level with himself. It seems to start from a regard for self, to recognise the claims of self. It is a nobler morality—this is what has been alleged—that calls upon men to love their neighbours not merely as well as, but better than themselves. To live for others, quite suppressing and subordinating self, may be the high ideal, the inspiring principle, of a good man's efforts. Such a man should think, not "How should I wish my neighbour to behave towards me?" but "How can I serve my neighbour? how can I do the most good, regardless of my own pleasure or interest, to those around me?"

This, you will perceive, is a very plausible allegation. It seems to show that the morality of the Gospels, though we may have thought it reasonably high, has after all been left behind by a morality which has risen higher. This, to most Christians, is a very unexpected conclusion. The general feeling is that the laws of conduct laid down in the Gospels are only too high, too exacting; that they require to be toned down and qualified before they can be applied to the practice of ordinary life. The morality of the Sermon on the Mount has been regarded as something ex-



ceptional, something ethereal, that might have suited the first disciples or saints in later ages who have retired from the world, but "too good For human nature's daily food." And Christian expositors have generally felt called upon to show that the laws of the kingdom of heaven, as laid down by the Lord Jesus in these discourses, were essentially such as men might act upon and ought to act upon, though they may seem to enjoin an almost romantic or chimerical suppression of self and superiority to the world. Still, you perceive it may be argued that to love my neighbour as myself and to do to him as I should wish him to do to me, is a rule which assumes that I am caring for myself, and which does not aim at doing more than placing my neighbour on a level with myself in my estimate of his claims upon me.

A practical man might be inclined to answer, "This morality is exacting enough, in all conscience. Let speculators see what they can do to bring people up to this stage, before they complain that it is not so high as some other that they can imagine." But the answer ought not, I think, to be quite satisfactory to the Christian mind. We feel sure

that human speculation could not outdo the principles and motives which our Lord commended to his disciples.

The answer I should prefer is that which I have partly indicated. The disciple of Jesus Christ is not only to love his neighbour as himself, but to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. And this latter commandment, the first and great one, has much to do with a man's relations to his fellow-men. It would, we might almost say, be enough of itself, if the second were not, for the sake of explicitness, added to it.

To assume that God is one object, up in heaven, and humanity another object, down here on earth, and that the two spheres to which they respectively belong are separate from each other, is a delusion contrary to nature and fact, most contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Gospel. According to our Lord's teaching, he and men, he and his Father, men and their Father, are bound together in relations of unimaginable closeness. The God whom we are to worship is chiefly the Father and Maker of the human race; and he has revealed himself in his Son Jesus

our Saviour. See what our Lord has said in this Sermon on the Mount—let me read you once more the priceless words: “I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? and if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Is it possible to aspire to an unselfishness of devotion to our fellow-men that transcends this? And this is grounded in filial devotion to the heavenly Father. Our Lord taught “Forgive; forgive the trespasses your fellow-men commit against you;” and, as the strongest security for such conduct, he bade his disciples pray to their Father in heaven, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” For, he added, “if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your

Father forgive your trespasses." And thus the higher acts of love towards men, those which are most difficult, and for which it seems less obvious to find a constraining motive, are associated by the Lord Jesus with that obligation towards the heavenly Father which must be felt, if it is recognised at all, to be utterly transcendent and indisputable. Think, further, of the affections with which the disciples of Christ learnt to regard their Master, with what reverence they confessed his authority, with what unreserved confidence they followed him, with what loyal devotion they gave themselves up to him. He became to them the object—and it was his Father's will and his own will that he should be—of an admiring love, of a passion of self-surrender, which seemed to them perfectly reasonable and sane when they reflected on what he was to them and what he had done and was doing for them. And Jesus was one who could only be known as the lover of mankind, who had given his life for them whom he called brethren. To love Jesus Christ was to love men, with a transcendental passion, through him. We find, then, in our duty towards God, the supreme

principle of duty towards our neighbour also, and one that works quite naturally and with a divine force. What might seem, if men only were in question, the arbitrary and baseless—however noble—enthusiasm of a fellow-man, is in a Christian the simple and proper affection of one who loves God as the heavenly Father is entitled to be loved. Let any one find, if he can, a morality richer, more generous, more universal, having sanctions profounder or more real, than that which is the natural mind of children of the all-gracious Father.

To live for others is only possible, I believe, to one who lives in some sort for God. But it is possible to talk, and even to think, of living for God, of having faith in him, of loving him, without having any real consciousness in the heart and soul corresponding to those words. Mere religion may be a pretence, a profession, a dream. And therefore duty to our neighbour has been explicitly insisted upon. After the first and really comprehensive commandment follows this—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. St. John, who bore witness so emphatically to God and his claims upon us, was

moved also to state in very plain terms the claims which man has on his fellow-man. "Brethren, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And Jesus Christ, at the very time when he was urging so strongly that his disciples should fear the Father who sees in secret, that they should live in humble and thankful dependence upon his grace, and that they should give themselves absolutely to the doing of his will, spoke also the words we are considering, "Whatsoever things ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets." To Jesus Christ, this way of showing goodwill and rendering service to men was the purest and simplest way of manifesting devotion to the Father ; there could be no filial mind towards God in one who did not so act.

And let us not be so foolish as to value lightly this precept. We do right, as I have admitted, in refusing it the highest place ; there is, it is true, no enthusiasm, no transcendental power of appeal, in it. But what resources of guidance, of warning, of sugges-

tion, there are in it! It is indeed an idle folly for the best of men to place himself above it, as if he did not need its monitions. To whom may it not be perpetually useful to say to himself, "Let me consider whether I am doing as I should like to be done by?" There is a dictum of a school of moralists who do not acknowledge the divine constitution of humankind, "Everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one." And there is some value in this assertion of equality, even for those who see in the human fellowship a body composed of many members, a family of many brethren, in Christ. Anything is good which forcibly reminds a man that he is not a centre, a highest being, to whose pleasure and interest other existences are but subordinate ministers. I am here, my neighbour is there; I must not claim for myself more than I allow to him: if he is under duty to me, I am under duty to him. If I override his wishes, his self-respect, his welfare—how should I like it were he to do the same to me? It is good, I say, repeatedly to test what we are doing by the extremely obvious measure, How should I like it were my neighbours to deal with me



as I am dealing with them? There is something which may come home to every class of mind, in every sort of circumstances, in this self-questioning. Take for example the fault-finding disposition referred to a few verses above our text, and in the corresponding passage taken from St. Luke for to-day's Gospel. "Judge not," says our Lord. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye?" You know with what an irresistible gravitation the natural man is drawn towards fault-finding. It is so easy to discern what is wrong, what is unbecoming, what is vulgar, in a neighbour's conduct or character. Well, it is the greater thing to urge that they who would be imitators like beloved children of the Father in heaven must so love their neighbour that they shall have no mind to dwell with anything but regret and noble shame on what is unworthy in him. But it is not a bad thing to urge the fault-finder to look at home, to ask himself how he could bear the scrutiny of an unfavourable eye, whether he would prefer to be himself the object of a grudging unfriendly criticism which dwells on blemishes and makes the most of them, or to be regarded with generosity and

trustful kindness. It is a most wholesome reflection, if by chance we have to wince under misconstruction, or are made sore by what seems to us inconsiderate neglect or overlooking, or are pushed aside by an eager and greedy competitor, to say to ourselves, "Let me take care how I run the risk of doing any such offence to another! I am able to perceive now what pain this kind of treatment may give, even though it spring from mere carelessness. Probably there is no intention of injury in the conduct from which I am myself suffering; I may as well put the least unfriendly construction of which it is susceptible upon it. At all events I can make a good use of it by letting it be a warning to myself."

Self-regard is a necessary part of life; and that our Lord's teaching turned it to account, without stimulating it or making it the basis of action, shows how real and natural that teaching was. To do as we would be done by, though, as I repeat, a secondary and subordinate rule of action, is not incompatible with the greater principle of giving our lives for the brethren. It uses for good our consciousness of what pleases

us, without in any way encouraging us to think only or chiefly of what pleases us, and to seek that as our end. Let us listen, dear brethren, as docile disciples of our Lord and Master, to both the primary and the secondary lessons, to the greater and lesser commandment. Let us willingly receive hints of practical duty and kindness from our own human experience, whilst we desire and pray to be taken up and carried forward and used by the heavenly love of the Father, in its great work of redeeming and blessing his children.

V.

SELF-SACRIFICE, FROM  
DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.

(Preached at Christ Church, 11th April 1880.)

“Leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.”—1 PETER ii. 21.

IT is obvious that, if we are to consider the external and particular discharge of duties, our Lord cannot be an example to any of us in more than a very limited portion of our lives. Jesus Christ was a son; and we are told that he was subject to his parents. He was a brother, and a townsman with fellow-townsmen; and we are told that he was in favour with men as well as with God. He had resources of beneficence at his command; and we see him going about to do good to the souls and bodies of the people amongst whom he dwelt. He was a master of disciples; and his dealing

with them was such as to win their reverence and love. He was a man ; and the picture of him given by the simple narratives of the Evangelists is that of one pure, tender, fearless, full of compassion for his fellow-men, absolutely devoted to the will of his heavenly Father. But he was not a woman ; he was not a husband ; he was not a father ; he was not a servant, bond or hired ; he was not in business ; he was not in civil office ; he was not a priest. Now when we are reading about our fellow-creatures who have gone before us, in the biographies which are so endlessly interesting to us, a part of the interest which these lives excite is due to the particular circumstances and relations in which the subjects of them lived. It does us good to see how faithful persons have discharged duties which we ourselves are called to perform, those of husbands and wives and parents, of lawyers and merchants, of domestic servants, of Christian ministers ; and how a life that might have been solitary has been glorified, like that of a Mary Carpenter or a Sister Dora, by special enterprises of noble voluntary service. It is clear therefore that the example left us by the Lord Jesus is one

which can be largely supplemented by other lives. Good Christians may be said to fill up that which is behind or lacking in the actions and instructions as well as the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church.

But when we look at what is said in the New Testament, whether by our Lord himself or by his Apostles, about the following of his example, we find that it is not his external life that is set before us, as presenting a copy which we may imitate, but rather some principle—probably the one master-principle of his life—which we are to study to make our own. It is Jesus humbling himself in love whom we are to make it our labour to resemble, in whose footsteps we are to walk. “If I, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” “We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbour for that which is good unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself.” “Not seeking mine own profit,

but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who humbled himself, and became obedient." Add to these passages this one from St. Peter,—“ If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” You see how the example set before us is that of the voluntary sufferer, of him who pleased not himself and sought not his own, of him who kept down all impulses of self-seeking and resentment, of him who acted out that charity or love of which St. Paul sang the praises. It is enough for us, we may safely say, enough for all our moral needs, if this mind of Christ is in us also, if we can follow him in his love-inspired offering of himself.

The principle of self-sacrifice, of unselfish



goodness, is not one which is left to us Christians only to advocate in these days. It receives recognition on all hands. A philosopher will demonstrate that there is in truth no such thing as choice in human action. He will admit, of course, that we fancy that we have volition, that we are under an irresistible impression that we can choose whether to do this or that, that we cannot help feeling that this thing would be right, and that would be wrong, for us to do : but he will argue that this is all illusion. He will convince himself that, in what is called inexorable fact, a man is a machine, has no more volition than a plant has. But then, when we are beginning to infer from these demonstrations that human morality is gone, and that we might as reasonably speak of a self-denying watch, or a generous steam-engine, as of a self-denying or a generous man, the philosopher will tell us, to our surprise and perplexity, that he believes in morality as much as we do, and that—for all his demonstrations—he genuinely admires self-denying goodness, and scorns meanness and cowardice and falsehood and conceit and all forms of self-love. Another man of

science will undertake to show how our highest sentiments of morality have been developed out of the inevitable pressure of human life; how the principle of self-preservation has led and constrained men to stand together for mutual defence, how the social instinct has thus been created and strengthened, how the interest of the society has through long ages pressed individuals to think more of what is serviceable to the society than of what pleases themselves, and how self-sacrifice has thus been naturally evolved out of self-love. The selfishness might seem to deserve the principal credit, for the fruit it has borne; but that which is developed is scientifically better than that out of which it has grown, and therefore the evolutionist, as such, is ready to contribute his peculiar enthusiasm to the exaltation of self-sacrifice. The distinguished Frenchman of letters,<sup>1</sup> who is now lecturing amongst us, is one of the most eloquent of all the worshippers of this principle. It is his work, to explain the origin of Christianity more completely than other inquirers have done it before him, by natural causes. And

<sup>1</sup> M. Renan.

he finds the most powerful cause in men's natural passion for self-sacrifice. There is something, he holds, so sweet, so beautiful, so attractive, in self-sacrifice, that men must have a religion for the organisation of it. Religion is the organisation of self-sacrifice ; and, self-sacrifice being as natural to man as selfishness, religion, in some form or other, will exist as long as the human race. Christianity, according to M. Renan, or at least the precious part of it, is a product of the irrepressible instinct which prompts men to deny themselves for the good of others.

You see then, brethren, that the latest wisdom of the world conspires with the New Testament in commending the mind that was in Christ Jesus to the imitation of all men. The philosophy of selfishness cannot indeed be extinct. It must be lingering in secret haunts, justifying by its old and apparently very strong arguments the devotion of each man to his own interests. That every man, if he is wise, will naturally so plan and order his life that he may get the greatest amount of happiness out of existence, is a doctrine which formerly was not ashamed to proclaim itself from the housetops, and which even

allied itself with a firm belief in the Christian religion ; and I can scarcely suppose that there are not persons who still hold it in theory, as there are certainly many who act upon it with more or less of discernment. But the doctrine that self-sacrifice is noble, and advanced, and the only principle worthy of enlightened persons, is now the fashionable creed of the intellectual world, applauded by those who are emancipated from the beliefs to which it used to belong, and taken up—as I said—with a new and eloquent enthusiasm by those who declare that they know of no God to whom man can offer himself, and who might have been expected to profess the Epicurean philosophy.

Well, brethren, it is good at all events, from whatever point men start, that they should devote themselves in labour and endurance and danger for the good of their fellow-men ; it is glorious that they should be humble and patient and self-forgetful. It is good, even, that they should make much of pure self-sacrifice as an ideal, and so give it a power over their imaginations and affections, if they are in earnest, and are thinking what they are talking about. This glorifi-

cation of self-sacrifice by those who see nothing beyond this visible world ought to be awakening and stimulating to us who have accepted it as our calling to walk in the steps of Jesus Christ.

The Christian doctrine concerning the surrender of self may claim some manifest advantages as compared with that of its most modern preachers. Let me go over its old and sacred elements. The word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to men a Father in heaven, whose children they were, though they were ignorant of him and estranged from him. It treated them as sinful and weak, but addressed them in gracious calls of invitation and encouraging promises of kindness and help. Jesus Christ presented himself, the Son of God and Son of man, to the faith of men; that through believing in him they might believe in the Father, and through knowing him they might know the Father. When it was considered who and what this Father in heaven, the Father of Jesus Christ, was, it was not much to ask of men, that they should surrender themselves to him, to the generosity and amplitude of his forgiveness, to the safety of his keeping, to the performance of

his will. If they had believed in Jesus Christ, they had seen the ideal man, whose glory it was to give himself absolutely, in perfect unity of will, to the Father. There is something rational, surely,—I would almost venture to say, scientific—in the appeal of one who believed that Jesus had come as the Father's Son, made to those who had a like faith with him, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable worship. And be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Once admit the manifestation of the gracious Fatherhood of God in Christ, and the rest follows in a blessed coherence and rationality. To me it seems natural that, if men are bidden to sacrifice themselves, they should ask why, to whom, to what? And if no answer, or shadow of an answer, can be given to these questions, it does not seem precisely scientific to cry out that self-sacrifice is noble, is advanced, is irresistibly sweet. The Gospel calls on a man to give himself

up, in trust and obedience, to One who knows him, from whom and whose he is, who is able to take care of him, in whose service he will find his perfect freedom. The self-sacrifice of the Christian is not self-destruction, it is the confiding surrender of himself into safe hands. No Christian teacher has a right to enjoin self-injury, or to ask for anything but that a man should conform himself to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God as he is able by experience to ascertain what that will is.

Do you feel that there is any light in an argument which proves to you that you have no more power of choice than a machine has, by way of introducing an exhortation that you should deny and suppress yourselves? The Gospel assumes that you have the most solemn responsibility of choice, that you are spiritual and therefore voluntary beings, that you may choose to estrange yourselves from grace and truth and righteousness, or to respond to the call of your Father and your Saviour. The will is no doubt a mystery, we cannot need to have that proved to us or brought to our recollection. It is not well to boast of our free will ; it is truer to say



that the will only becomes free by submitting itself to the Divine will, that it is in bondage until it thus enters into possession of its true freedom. But we need to act in the sense that we are not automata, moved only by influences outside of ourselves ; we need the consciousness of being called, at least, to freedom. And we must assume such a consciousness when we glorify self-sacrifice, or we are talking what we know to be nonsense.

Compare the Gospel doctrine, again, with that which affirms that all the self-sacrificing sentiments have been developed by the pressure of competition. Men are stronger, this doctrine says, as members of society ; societies become stronger through the growth of the social sentiments ; and these sentiments, which are those of self-sacrifice, are thus nourished by the pursuit of strength or the instinct of self-preservation. The tracing of such development is very interesting, and, in part at least, highly convincing. The law of development is giving us a new insight into the operation of the Divine energy in things. It may make some impression upon us to see that the principle of suppressing self in the interest of others is associated with the highest

stages of human development, that the selfish tendencies in that sense are low, and the unselfish high. But it gives us poor help in any struggle with our worse nature, to be assured with the strongest possible demonstration that we have been made just what we are by the natural action of the elementary social forces. The law of evolution does not exhort, does not command, does not constrain. The Gospel calls upon us to recognise the true self-surrender as Divine. It bids us look to the Father who asks it of us, it bids us consider the Son of God whom we are to follow, it offers to us the Spirit of the Father and of the Son to quicken us. It holds out to us the glory of a fellowship with the Divine nature. Instead of turning our thoughts downwards and backwards, it beseeches us to look upwards and onwards.

Once more : how do you feel, let me ask, when you are told that self-sacrifice is so sweet, so fascinating, so enjoyable, that men *will* sacrifice themselves, and that the Christian religion is the great proof of this irresistible natural impulsion? It seems to me that the ordinary human being will answer with some impatience, "This move-

ment of self-sacrifice, if you mean by it something more than the indulgence of a luxurious and self-complacent sentiment, if it means a downright postponement of one's own pleasure and one's own interest to the good of others, if it means submitting to obscurity and effacement, to danger and privation and suffering and death, in the service of truth and right and human well-being, is one which I find it not at all difficult to resist. I do not perceive that men in past times have manifested self-humbling and self-forgetting devotion because they were carried away by the resistless fascination of such devotion, but rather because they felt themselves claimed by a higher Power, to which—as they came to be convinced—it would have been base, unsafe, unnatural, to refuse themselves. It is fanciful enough to suppose a St. Paul giving himself up, unconsciously, because the joy of self-surrender carried him away. To suppose that any human being can consciously give himself up because he realizes that it is so delightful to do it, is an insult to the dignity of human nature.” That, I think, is what would occur to most of us, when we hear or read of the luxury of self-sacrifice. I do not

mean to deny that we naturally admire examples of heroic self-devotion, nor that there is a beauty, to which only a base nature could be quite insensible, in the most commonplace unselfish goodness. Nor again do I deny that there is a deep joy, such as we can hardly understand, but which we know to be real, in the heart of him who is enduring the worst things for the sake of truth and right. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,"—this is the triumphant defiance of the true follower of Christ. But it was not by the influence of the joy, still less for the sake of the joy, that the self-devotion was carried out. In order to be sustained at his noblest, man needs the sense of a Power above him, to which he may rationally offer himself, and which is worthy of the sacrifice.

We cannot live—it is the old truth—lives of which we need not be ashamed, for our own pleasure or in our own strength. We are made dependent creatures. The Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel teaching, is not so much a pattern to be copied, as a Master to be followed. The Galilean disciples followed him with their eyes upon him, as a Master

from whom they dared not separate themselves. He was the Good Shepherd, the true Shepherd, walking before them; and they, his true sheep, knew his voice, and followed him. They knew his voice; when he called them, they knew well that his voice had a heavenly authority in it, and they yielded themselves to its authority. Whilst Jesus was with them in the flesh, they were even too dependent on his visible form and his audible word. It was expedient for them that he should go away. But he did not cease, when he was out of their sight, to be their Shepherd. They still listened for his voice, they looked for his guidance, they trusted in his care and protection, they were resolute to walk in his steps. And the image of him which dwelt in their memories was that of the voluntary sufferer, who submitted patiently to all indignities, who gave himself up to the death of the Cross, that he might so bring men to God. They understood more and more thoroughly that self-oblation to the righteous Father was the root and the crown of human well-doing.

Dear brethren, you know your weakness. You know what a weary struggle you have

to maintain against the dominion of self. At one time it is vanity, at another it is excitement, at another it is greed, at another it is indolence, which self assumes as the form by which you are most easily conquered. It will not do for you to let yourselves drift, or to consider only what attracts you. It would be folly in you to forego the help that comes from the consciousness that you are called, from the reverent contemplation of a gracious Master, of a heavenly Father. You may have the support of knowing that, if you give yourselves up, it is not to throw yourselves away. Our Master has assured us that he who loses himself for his sake shall gain himself. The Christian who really follows Christ will not become the less sincere in love and patience, for knowing that he may commit the keeping of his soul to God in well-doing as to a Creator who may be trusted.

The simple aspiration of our lives should be, that we may be conformed to the will of God, that the will of God may be done through us, whether in action or in endurance, in joy or in sorrow. Jesus Christ is our Master, to be followed in single-hearted and

studious self-surrender, alike in prosperity and in adversity. Is it the more necessary to remember this our calling when we are elated by success, or when we are depressed by failure? Either experience is a temptation, and may be used as an opportunity by self. Very many of our countrymen have known what it is to be greatly elated, or to be sorely depressed, during the last fortnight. We have been passing through a conflict<sup>1</sup> in which the keenest hopes have been stimulated, to find their issue half in triumph half in disappointment. Many could tell, if they knew the secrets of their own hearts, of the difficulty of keeping a generous self-subduing temper in the heat of conflict, in the excitement of victory, in the bitterness of defeat. But the Christian has no choice but to follow Christ through all that is trying and arduous, of whatever complexion the difficulty may be. His prayer must be, "May thy will, O Father in heaven, be done, whether I am successful or unsuccessful." The will of the Father will certainly enjoin thankfulness and moderation in happiness, patient submission in disappointment. In either circumstance

<sup>1</sup> The General Election of 1880.



we may equally aim at a reverent self-surrender. For most of us the cup is mixed, and we have a double discipline. All the Divine dispensations have the same end in view, to conform us to the will of God ; and they will not have accomplished their perfect work until we can say with the Son of God, in the most trying moment of our lives, whether of triumph or of tribulation, "Not my will, O Father, but thine, be done !"

## VI.

# THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER AND POLITICS.

(Read at the Carlisle Church Congress, 1884.)

WE do not look to the clergy alone for Christian teaching; laymen also may give it, and sometimes with greater impressiveness and effect. But every one who has the cure of souls is by his office a Christian teacher, and the question whether the clergyman has anything to teach from the pulpit concerning the duties of men as members of a nation is one of growing interest and importance. For the advance of democracy is spreading political responsibility more and more widely amongst the people. It is probable that, before long, many of the women as well as most of the men, in every considerable congregation, will have, by means of votes for members of Parliament, a direct share in controlling the

public policy of the country. It is an argument used for and against the concession of votes to women, that it will increase the power of the clergy. Certainly it will be a striking incident of that general diffusion of political power which is giving increased opportunities and more urgent duties to all who are able to teach anything to their neighbours. The Christian teacher who excludes politics from his consideration is resigning to non-Christian teachers one of the most important spheres of human action.

But, besides what he may feel to be his own want of competence, the clergyman who would give pastoral instruction in politics finds difficulties in his way. There is a notion which prevailed once amongst earnest Christians more widely than it does now, that the business of the religious man is to occupy himself with the saving of his soul and not with secular things like politics. The clergyman, it was urged, ought to preach "as a dying man to dying men." It would be generally admitted now that it is at least as much his vocation to preach as a living man to living men. But that notion is not yet quite extinct, and it has left behind it a

feeling not easily dislodged, that a sermon is somewhat lowered by the introduction of secular topics. Then there is a kindred notion that politics are a rough game, in which one party plays for the prizes against another; and that not only religion, but delicate morality and conscientiousness also, are out of place in that arena. There are certain rules, it has been held, which it is a point of honour for the combatants to observe, but these are not the laws of Christ, and the game could not be played in scrupulous accordance with Christian principles. But the clergyman's chief difficulty, in approaching the discussion of political questions, is that he would give offence to the one party or the other by taking a side. The understanding that the pulpit is to be neutral is one which has manifest advantages. If clergymen are to be partisans in politics, as they so often are in theology, there will be another division forced upon our much-enduring congregations. Conservatives will be precluded from attending a Church in which Liberalism is preached, as Evangelicals are, for example, from attending one in which the clergyman is an aggressive ritualist.

The two former objections would give way of themselves before a sense of the importance of national life and the seriousness of political duty. If we are told that a Christian preacher has two tasks only, that of converting sinners and that of building up the converted, we may point to the prophets, the inspired preachers of Israel. Of what use can their writings, which are throughout political, be to us, if we do not acknowledge national life to be an object of Divine interest? The New Testament, it is true, is not the book of a nation; it is the book of the Kingdom of God, of the Universal Church; but it gives us no reason for supposing that nations, any more than families, lose their distinctness and their duties in the world-embracing society. As to the worldly character of party politics, is the government of the country to be deliberately abandoned to men without a conscience? Whatever there is in politics which will not bear the light of Christian principle ought surely to cause shame and distress to all lovers of their country. And it should be borne in mind that there has probably been as much that Christ would condemn in religion as in politics.

We must expect to meet with evil everywhere ; but we must not admit that anywhere it has a chartered right to be let alone.

If we recognise that national action is a matter which holds an extremely important place in the relations between God and men, and that in our own country the direct responsibility for it is being formally distributed amongst all the householders of the land, how can it be supposed that the Christian teacher, that the clergyman with a cure of souls, has liberty to pass it by? He may well say to himself that the claim of some injured or neglected class at home, or the offence of some wicked aggression abroad, should be to him quite as serious a thing in the sight of God as the wearing or not wearing of certain vestments in the ceremonial of worship. If a clergyman has a right, or is bound in conscience, to be outspoken with regard to ritual or theological doctrine at the cost of alienating a portion of his people, has he not a similar right or duty where an act of morality which is immense in its scale and influence is concerned? Christ and his Apostles were always earnest in upholding substance against form and letter,

and in pronouncing the weightier matters of the law to be judgment and mercy and faith. It might have a wholesome effect if, whilst many clergymen are with a light heart driving away sections of the people from their parish churches by asserting their personal convictions or tastes in religion, one here and there should run the risk of giving offence by being true to his convictions as a Christian teacher in the greater morality.

But I plead against the light heart, and the spirit of partisanship, and the want of tenderness towards the feelings of the Christian people, equally in religion and in politics. It seems to me a crime in a clergyman to assume that he is the one person who has rights in the Church, and that his opinions are those which are to dominate without check. Reverence has taught the people that it would be unseemly to express dissent in the sacred building, and that it is of vital importance that the preacher should speak what he believes on questions which seem to him to be serious. But it argues a deplorable lack of reverence in the clergyman if he coolly takes advantage of what is thus allowed to him, and forgets that the people were in the



Church before he came to it, and ought to be there when he leaves it. So far as politics are concerned, if a preacher touches upon them, he ought to keep in his mind that amongst those before him to whose consciences he owes reverence as of brethren in Christ, there are probably both Conservatives and Liberals. He will feel that his primary duty is to appeal to the Christian convictions of both. In the Church, at all events, whatever liberties he may claim in civil life, he is bound to rid himself before God of the prepossessions of a partisan, and to call others to look with himself at questions of policy in the pure light of the Kingdom of God. There are principles affecting such questions which he will maintain to be absolutely true, and as binding on bodies of men as on individuals.

Every one knows that covetousness and ambition and love of importance will tempt individuals into wrong-doings. We who teach are always warning our hearers against being thus misled. But nothing is more certain or more obvious than that nations and governments are moved by the same passions, and led by them into wrong-doings on the great scale. Nations and classes in nations have

shewn themselves greedy and ambitious and insolent, have broken faith, and committed great wrongs, and trampled upon the weaker, and given themselves up to luxurious enjoyment. Not kings and aristocracies only, but republics and whole populations, have been guilty of these misdoings. Is there to be no warning, no protest on behalf of the Christian law, against the sins of rulers and nations and classes? The Christian teacher who declares that he has nothing to do with these things, but is only concerned with the prospects of men's souls after death, is untrue to all the nobler traditions of the Christian Church as well as of Israel, and is resigning himself to a necessary insignificance. It is the special glory of the Christian morality to prescribe consideration for the weak, humanity, gentleness, self-repression. The Catholic Church embraces all tribes and peoples and tongues within the bond of Christian brotherhood. Any act of oppression, therefore, any fighting between people and people which springs out of vanity or ambition or covetousness, is an outrage upon the Christian law; and every teacher who is called to be an exponent of that law is bound to mark such

things as offences against God, and to bear witness to national unity and international harmony as divinely appointed ends for all true Christian citizens. How else can he speak freely and sincerely of God as the righteous Father of all mankind? How else can he put any meaning into the great charter of the universal Redemption—"The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever"?

In general it will no doubt be better, on account of human weakness, that the clergyman in the pulpit should insist only on principles and motives in the sphere of the greater morality, and should restrain himself from discussing in detail the measures of the Government and the action of the Opposition. He is bound to be suspicious of his own perfect impartiality, and to be as tender as possible towards the legitimate prepossessions of his hearers. But there are manifest limits to this reticence. The example of all the more inspired teachers of Israel and of Christendom shews us that there may be national and social crises in which he who would speak the word of God faithfully must

speak out plainly, without regard to the favour or disfavour with which his words may be received. Would our clergy or our Episcopate be held in less honour, if more of their members were ready to risk their influence and their popularity in rebuking the selfishness of leaders and classes, or standing against the stream of a national passion? To bear such a witness with effect, a man must be deeply convinced and strongly moved, as well as adequately informed; and a general and traditional habit of looking at politics from the point of view of the Kingdom of God would help to open the clerical mind to such inspiration.

There is a danger lest the clergy should fall into a different habit with regard to politics. They are tempted to regard the independence and exaltation of the Church as the proper objects of their concern, and to interest themselves in political movements only as they bear upon those objects. The insidious advice is often given, that the Church should preserve a neutral attitude towards parties, that it should beware of identifying itself with Conservatism and the upper classes, and be ready to win advantages

for religion out of the democratic movement of the day. We are encouraged to imitate the wisdom of the Church of Rome, which has shown a great power of accommodating itself for the sake of its own ends to varying political circumstances. But history and the best divinity alike warn us against the error of making the cause of the Church, or the cause of religion, the supreme object of our devotion. It is a desecration of national life, to pay it no serious regard, except as it offers occasions for the magnifying of the Church or the promoting of religion. These objects, as our own feelings will probably tell us, and as any survey of the history of the Church or of religions will demonstrate, are not identical with the cause of God—of the righteous Ruler of nations, of the Father in heaven who makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and unjust. It has been too amply proved that those who give themselves to the worship of the Church or of religion have not in general the keenest susceptibility towards justice and equity and humanity. What we need is an honest reverence for national and human interests as things of

God, and to be watchfully on our guard not to set religion above righteousness. We may be always sure that in serving righteousness we shall be pleasing God, whilst there is by no means the same security about the service of religion.

There may be some excuse, in the prevailing opinions and assumptions of the day, for regarding secular movements and conflicts as having nothing of God in them, and for separating the things of civil government, as not belonging to God, from the ecclesiastical things which are God's. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that at the present time politicians are carrying on their work with little express recognition of the God whose instruments they are. It may be that, through this apparent neglect of God, a deeper and more enlightened acknowledgment of him is in God's own way being prepared. But the less there is in the political world of the confession of a Divine purpose to be wrought out in secular history, the more need is there that Christian teachers should bear their witness to the existence of such a purpose. It is generally felt at this moment that the times are big

with important issues. The equilibrium of the world is being disturbed by the rapid development of new forces, and no one can calculate what the arrangements of the future will be. At home, the system of government by party is manifestly breaking down ; and there is hardly a suggestion of any other system, compatible with government by representation, which can take its place. Serious constitutional and social changes appear to be impending. In Europe, great empires are eying one another with a curiously restless jealousy, which is ready at any moment to be inflamed into passionate hostility. The philosophers who think they have demonstrated that the self-regarding instincts of men must of themselves, by a process of necessary development, bring about harmonious adjustments and universal prosperity, do not altogether convince and reassure us. We have reason to fear these self-regarding instincts, rather than to put a quiet trust in them. It still seems to be of the highest importance that men, not only as individuals, but in classes and nations, should be led to think more of what is just and humane than of what they would like, and to



shrink with a wholesome awe from transgressing the commands of the Eternal. Any public example of waiting upon God, of curbing ambitions and passions by the restraints of duty, of making a sacrifice or bearing a burden in the interest of humanity, is, at the present time, of the greatest service to mankind. The hope of peace and well-being throughout the world depends greatly upon the cultivation of a sense of duty between communities, and upon the cherishing of a sacred ideal of universal concord. It is given to the Christian teacher to declare that the God of the whole world has this ideal as his purpose, and that he will vindicate it by the sure punishment of nations which thwart it; to assert the claims of those who cannot protect themselves as the peculiar care of God; to mock in his name at the confidence of the overbearing; to remind his fellow-citizens that their pride in the country which they love should long above all things to see it, not making ostentation of its strength, but winning the confidence of other countries by its reverence for justice and humanity.

## VII.

### INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL.

(Preached before the University of Oxford, 19th November 1882.)

“The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ.”—REVELATION xi. 15.

As we look back on the history of morality, whatever our theories of human history may be, we can all perceive an actual development or growth in men's conceptions of what is right and good. Morality, as a matter of fact, has been progressive. Conduct which was allowed in an earlier age has been disallowed in a later. Men have learnt to recognise mutual bonds, to aim at relations of feeling and action, which were not apprehended by their forefathers. If progress of this kind has been going on in the past, it may be almost taken for granted that it is going on in the present also. Naturalists have made it evident that, in the physical

history of the world, the same causes and methods of change which prevailed in remote periods of the past are in operation now. So it must be in the moral world. It is often, indeed, with something like resentment that we hear it alleged that our own ethical rules are susceptible of improvement. The first attitude of many who are by no means indifferent to morality towards a coming change for the better is that of resistance. But if we see that in the past the revelation of higher laws of life has been progressive, why should we not look for similar progress in our own day? It should be interesting to us to watch in what lines the Revealer of laws, the Builder of human life, is beckoning us onward. To those who are thus on the watch, the present age will appear to be one in which men are learning not a few new lessons about their duty to each other. A Divine voice is forbidding us to be content with the conceptions and the action which satisfied our fathers, and showing us something better. The old notions about the place and claims of women, for example, have been modified in a very marked degree. The old notions about property, again, and especially about

the owning of land, are now being unsettled by ethical inquiry. And men are feeling their way after a higher conception and a nobler fulfilment of the relations which bind the races and the nations of the world together.

It is on this last subject that I propose to speak to you to-day. It is evident that in several important respects the cause of international humanity has of late years made considerable progress. It has owed much to the growth of intercourse of all kinds, promoted by the new facilities for travelling, and to the infinitely complicated ramifications of commerce. Community of material interest, though it has failed to fulfil the expectations of those who hoped that by this time it would have made war impossible, has created innumerable links of regard and good feeling between persons living in different countries. International tribunals, rights reciprocally conceded and sanctioned by treaties, minute regulations of commercial transactions, bring many members of different nations together on a common ground of responsibility. A more generally diffused tenderness with regard to human suffering,

and a perception of advantages to be enjoyed in turn by all belligerents, have together brought about a most appreciable mitigation of the cruelties of war, by means of rules which all civilised nations agree to respect. The professors of international law have had the interesting and honourable employment of putting into form the new rules of intercourse which register from time to time the high-water mark of advancing friendliness between nations. On the whole, there is more of a general consciousness of what the French call solidarity amongst all nations than has previously existed in the world.

But the Christianity of Christendom has not interested itself in this progress as it might have been expected to do. It has been left too much to international law to do the Gospel's work as well as its own. It is true that we read very little about nations, and nothing about their duties toward each other, in the New Testament. There were no nations to speak about in the age to which the New Testament belongs, and for many subsequent ages nations were either suppressed by the Empire, or were kept out of their due honour by the Papacy, which

had an instinctive jealous dread of national independence. But a universal dominion, whether imperial or ecclesiastical, is now a thing of the past. Nations have completely established themselves as constituting the system of the world. The only way, for our times and apparently for an indefinite future, to universal harmony is through the agreement and friendly communication of independent peoples. Now it has been the glory of the Gospel from the first to proclaim a fellowship of men, into which all tribes and peoples and tongues were gathered. The seer of the Revelation, in his vision of a redeemed humanity, beheld the nations walking in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb, and the kings of the earth bringing the glory and honour of the nations into the ideal city. In calling itself Catholic, the Church of Christ has from its days of weakness and obscurity claimed the *orbis terrarum* as its heritage. All who profess and call themselves Christians ought to desire with religious earnestness to extend a hand of fellowship to every human brother. The idea of great sections of mankind setting themselves against each other, and biting

and devouring and threatening to consume each other, ought to excite an unconquerable aversion in the Christian consciousness. And, when we look back over the past, we are in the habit of recounting with pride the services which, as we affirm, Christian faith has rendered to humanity at large. It is to its influence, we say, that the extinction of slavery is due. Slavery is not denounced as an institution in the New Testament; but Christian faith, we affirm, could not work in the hearts of men without making them intolerant of slavery. Christianity has wrought from within; that is its appointed method; but it has therefore wrought with the more power and effect upon outward conduct and customs. When the principles of Christ take hold of the inward life, they will not rest till they have reformed outward practice. Not slavery only, but many other great social evils, have yielded to the faith and hope and charity which the Gospel has nourished in the hearts of Christians. Is Christianity now to fold its hands and declare that its work is done? How can its work be done, so long as any anti-human customs remain to break the bonds of the universal



brotherhood between man and man? It comes to little to say that war, for example, is not forbidden by the New Testament, and that in the present state of the world it would be irrational for a nation to proclaim that it will not go to war. Be it so; but the question is whether the Christianity of the world, and—to come home to ourselves—our own Christianity, is operating with its peculiar force upon the causes which produce war; whether we Christians are keeping before our minds the ideal of human fellowship which Christ has created for us, and are striving in such ways as are open to us to bring the world nearer to that ideal. To excuse an evil as necessary, and to acquiesce in it, is to be disloyal to our Christian calling, and to be untrue to the nobler traditions of our religion. We have not been taught to say, Because this or that institution is not such as the Christian ideal of the world can be supposed to sanction, therefore it is to be summarily abolished; we have been taught to reform by degrees, to unloose by moral influence the hold of a bad custom, to bring about a general feeling which will no longer bear the bad custom.

But nothing can excuse us as Christians for being allies and helpers of any evil in the world. If our Christianity is altogether passive in the presence of any un-Christian relations between the races of men, then it is condemned as hollow or moribund.

When we are thinking of what is not as it should be between nations, war is sure to come into our minds. The incidents of war are shocking to any one who contemplates them. The Christianity which has been most in fashion of late years, that which shrinks with impatient sensitiveness from the infliction or the sight of suffering, seems peculiarly outraged by the spectacle of myriads of fellow-Christians, or fellow-men, wounding and killing each other. It has been easy and natural for Christians to denounce war. We cannot wonder that the simple unworldly faith of George Fox should have laid it down as a fundamental rule of true Christianity, that no man and no society of men should under any provocation be drawn into fighting. On the other hand, men have seen, or believed that they have seen, quite clearly, that bad as war may be, it is better to fight than to be trampled

upon ; that to resolve and announce that you will use nothing but moral suasion to repress and punish wrong-doing is to offer a most tempting encouragement to wrong-doing ; that, if you saw a man wronging a woman, or torturing a child, to say that, because you were a Christian you could not strike him, would be to do violence to the surest Christian instincts. It is superfluous to argue that war is sometimes necessary, because no one now audibly denies it. Every one—for there is hardly a Quaker remaining who goes the length of George Fox in this matter—allows that a nation like the English cannot lay down its arms. There are some who will use the unfortunate language, that, though war is un-Christian, it is sometimes necessary to go to war ; but others with more discrimination contend that, when there is adequate cause for it, to go to war is as Christian as it is necessary. Let this, I would say, be granted. War, shocking as it always is, may be justified. To refuse to fight may often be cowardly and not noble. But it is not superfluous to note that, in accordance with the common impression, war always implies something wrong. It shows that the

world is, in some part of it, out of joint. If all were right, nations would be able to get on together without war. Imagine the world Christian, and you necessarily imagine it a world of order and concord, a world without war. An improved condition of international relations would mean, almost as a matter of course, less risk of war, less actual war. "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members?" To preach a crusade against war, is to attack an evil in the less reasonable and hopeful manner. Even to warn a people against allowing themselves to be drawn into a war which may not be a thoroughly defensible one, may have the disadvantage of putting forward the actual clash of arms as the thing from which a people ought morally to shrink. A high-spirited people will resent what seems to be an appeal to its softness or its insensibility. But it is possible to contend earnestly at all times, and with the more insistence when there seems to be the more urgent need for it, that covetousness, that a passionately-revengeful spirit, that impatience and discourtesy and want of kindly consideration,

are unworthy features of the conduct of a Christian nation towards other peoples ; that it ought to be assumed that nations will keep if possible on good terms with each other, and will not imperil the immense human interests entrusted to them severally and in common by needless readiness to quarrel. It is possible to condemn with severity official agents, and journalists, and private persons, who threaten and insult and irritate a foreign people. It is possible to go farther than this, and to maintain in the name of the Gospel that one nation ought to have a sincere care for another nation's welfare, and be willing to make some sacrifices for it, and that it ought to be a common object of Christian men in all countries to build up in harmony and helpfulness the body which consists of all the races of mankind.

That a hope which would look and strive for such international fellowship has great practical discouragements to contend with, is what every one must admit and feel. Christian hope is used to struggles against discouragements. But it knows what it is, also, to be wounded in the house of its friends. A discourse on war by the late Professor

Mozley, which may be remembered by some as delivered from this pulpit, but which has passed into the literature of this country, and from which I trust it may therefore not be improper to draw illustrations, does all it can to give a hopeless aspect to the near future of the world. In other places the same author has used the resources of his subtle and yet masculine intellect to exhibit the progressive nature of revelation and morality ; only apologising for the ruder moral conceptions of the Jews, and the cruelty and injustice sanctioned in the Old Testament, on the ground that they formed a stage which was to be left behind. But in the sermon of which I speak, he apologises for war as an evil of which we can never hope to get rid, as a permanent and necessary condition of the life of men on the earth. It is not, however, so much because it is maintained in this discourse that war is involved as a necessary consequence in the distinctness of nations, and is a fixed element in the economy of the world, that I venture to refer directly to it, but because it contains statements which seem to deny to Christians all hope of a world of order and peace. Not only do

these statements derive importance from their being made by so distinguished a theological teacher ; but it may be assumed that notions corresponding to them have a place in many other minds, and are doing their part to perplex men's beliefs and to chill their aspirations.

Professor Mozley claims "Gospel prophecy" as consonant with his anticipations of never-ending war. He admits that the Jewish prophet looked for an era of general righteousness and peace ; but this, he says, was through a confusion, which was corrected in the New Testament age. "The two worlds under the Gospel light divided, and the visible was exchanged for the invisible, as the *place* of the prophetic realm of peace. With respect to this world, later or Gospel prophecy is, if one may say so, singularly unenthusiastic ; it draws no sanguine picture, is in no ecstasy about humanity, speaks of no regeneration of society here ; it uses the language of melancholy fact." Could any criticism of Scripture be more baseless than this ? The mind of the chief New Testament prophet, the seer of the Revelation, was evidently soaked in Jewish prophecy,



and he was utterly unconscious that he was correcting it in the manner alleged. I cannot imagine it to be seriously denied that this prophet had a vision of a new earth before his eyes. He did not so divide his language as to give the melancholy fact all to this world, and the joyful imaginations all to the world beyond the grave. There were to be many sorrows on the earth; but the miseries were to issue in the victory of the Lamb. And this is the manifest character of all the Gospel prophecy, whether we read it in the apocalyptic book of the new dispensation, or in the aspirations of the Apostles, or in the statements of our Lord himself. Free criticism affirms with one voice that the first believers were expecting a Messianic kingdom to be established on the earth before the end of their age, and that with the reign of Christ they associated justice and peace and happiness. You may say that this was a delusion, or you may hold that there was a substantial fulfilment of those expectations, though not such a one as was pictured in dreams. But it is surely not open to any one to say that Gospel prophecy gave up the earth as hopeless. It is "a later

supplement" still that has corrected the prophecy of both the Testaments—I mean that theology which has chosen without warrant to fix all the hopes of the Christian upon the bliss he is to enjoy after death. This theology resolves human society into the individual elements of which it is composed. Dr. Mozley accepts this decomposition: "Mankind is all mass to the human eye, and all individual to the Divine,"—these are the closing words of his sermon. The converse of the proposition would be at least equally true. But the whole truth of the matter is, if we are to take St. Paul as an interpreter of the Divine mind, that to the eye of God mankind is a mass or body composed of individuals. One body, many members: that is the ideal of human existence. Each individual becomes truly himself through filling his place and fulfilling his function in the body; the body cannot be what the Creator intends unless each individual be loyal and sound. The New Testament does not help us much in conceiving what the future of mankind, on this earth and on the other side of the grave, is to be; but it at least teaches us to hope for a perfection,

both here and elsewhere, which is to be realized through the common relations of the members to the body and the head.

In order to liberate Christianity from any responsibility for that continuance of war which he does not deny to be out of harmony with it, Professor Mozley lays down the position that Christianity is not responsible for the natural order of the world. "If," he says, "an alteration in the system of the world would be necessary in order to stop war; if there is an irregularity in the structure of natural society, a void and hiatus in the fabric as it is; that is no deficiency which Christianity is required to correct. It is no part of the mission of Christianity to re-construct the order of the world; that is not its task, or its function. It assumes the world's system, and its want of system; its system as regards individuals, its unsystematic condition as regards nations; it does not profess to provide another world for us to live in." Christianity, it would seem, is here regarded as if it were some philosophy, or some corporation, with decidedly limited liability; whereas, if Christianity is equivalent to the Gospel, it professes to be the revelation of

the inner mind of him who is the Creator of the world's order. It undertakes, certainly not to undo the Creator's work, but to remove, through its heavenly powers, the moral evil which throws that work into confusion. It is enough, however, to quote what the writer himself almost immediately subjoins: "Without, indeed, any correction of the structure of the world, a universal change in the temper of mankind would stop war. But Christianity is not remedial to the whole of human nature, but only to those hearts that receive it." So far, then, as its authority is admitted and its influences received, Christianity does promise to check war. That so far as it is set at nought it will fail to do so, is what no one would think of denying. The author must mean to imply that Christianity has no promise or hope of affecting a sufficient number of minds to influence the political course of the world. But what binds us to take so hopeless a view of the purposes of God and the prospects of the world? Why is Christianity to be thus shut up within a narrow circle of believers, dwelling esoterically upon the hope that they themselves will be made happy

after death? "The Church," says Professor Mozley, "is no judge of national questions or of national motives, not having been made by her Divine Founder a 'judge or a divider' in this sphere. . . . She only contemplates war forensically, as a mode of settling national questions, which is justified by the want of any other mode." But why should not the Church contemplate war spiritually as well as forensically? Why should not the Christian conscience bear its witness as to national motives? We believe it to be true, no doubt—we who do not acknowledge the Papacy—that Christ did not set up any ecclesiastical tribunal to which nations, as such, are amenable; but, that questions and motives, if they may be rightly called national, are as such withdrawn from the judgment of the Spirit working in the hearts and minds of members of the Church, is what neither Scripture nor any ecclesiastical tradition has affirmed. It was by the judgment of the Church—that is, of Christians judging in the light of the Gospel—that the question of slavery, which was a national question, has been settled; and it is to the same judgment that we must look for the purification and

exaltation of national motives in dealing with other public questions.

Let it be freely granted that various difficulties confront us when we are considering how relations of order and goodwill may be won and preserved amongst the nations. Such difficulties have not been unknown in the history of morality. It is evidently intended that men should work their way to the better regulation of human life through speculative as well as practical problems. It has been a general condition of an advance in morality,—by which I mean the regulation of life,—that it has seemed to the majority to be questionable, if not dangerous to important interests, and has been won by those who had faith enough in the good which they saw before them to push on and try conclusions with experience. The laws of life, as we acknowledge them now, were not received cut and dried by any race or society; they have established themselves by degrees in accordance with new suggestions and new opportunities. The progressive regulation of international dealings has hitherto corresponded closely enough with the similarly progressive regulation of other parts of life.

With regard to marriage, industry, government, and all the relations between human beings, the morality of this age is not that of the Roman Empire, nor yet of the Christian Middle Age. The men of faith and hope, or, in Burke's phrase, the men of light and leading, have always been the instruments of God for the improvement of morality. Feeling and opinion have moved onward with the development of society, and have made what use they could of legislation for the sustaining of the rules which they approved. Law, as St. Paul taught, comes in after promise, for the restraining of transgressions, and has its indispensable function ; but the promise is that which has the creative power ; and, in the hearts which it moves, it grapples with problems and pushes aside objections.

Let us note, with the necessary brevity, some of the difficulties which obstruct the path of that progress which aims at international fellowship and co-operation.

1. The chief lion in this path is the want of any empire over the nations. The Papacy, indeed, offers to rule the world in the name of the Divine will, to dictate to



obedient nations what to do and what not to do, to be the Gospel and the law in one to the international system. In that offer lies a summary solution of the difficulty. But this solution the world is unanimous in rejecting. There is not a single nation, however humble and religious, not a single civil society of men, which is willing in these days to accept the Pope as its lord. What power, then, is to settle the differences of nations? Is there any alternative than that they should fight out their quarrel and learn which is the strongest? Making the worst of this difficulty, Professor Mozley declares the legal use of force for the repression of wrong-doing in a country to be the exact equivalent of war. Christianity, he says, was just as much bound to abolish the use of force in civil government as to abolish war. "Civil government is a kind of war with man; war, with its settlement of questions, is a kind of government of man. Can we indeed historically separate civil government and war, with reference to the ultimate basis of the force which each respectively applies? Civil government has practically arisen out of conquest." Is there, then, we shall surely

ask with astonishment, no such thing as justice, no such thing as the will of the Maker? Justice, says Thrasy-machus, is the interest of the stronger. Well, the stronger in each nation,—that is, the many as compared with the few,—have come to see for the most part that their interest is identical with justice. So a just God instructs and trains his creatures. But are we to see no distinction in kind between the legal punishment of a thief and the conquest of a weaker nation by a stronger? The glory and the hope of mankind lie in recognizing the justice which organizes and regulates with Divine authority the social order. Let men have learnt by what processes they may the justice which presides over civil law; the essential point is that they have learnt it. We all recognize justice, and with unanimous consent aim at bringing our laws into more perfect accord with it. The very thief bows before the justice of the law, and only tries to persuade the Court that he has not violated it. If it be said that of course every belligerent nation believes that it has justice on its side, I reply that that is notoriously untrue. “Our

country, right or wrong!" has been the toast of unashamed patriots. In the mutual dealings of nations, the first need is that justice should be acknowledged as having authority over them; that the consciences of men should be trained in reverence for a Divine law of goodwill and consideration binding nations together. Such a conviction will, of course, feel after ways in which transgression may be restrained. It is certain that no effectual way will be found in a moment. It is not improbable that what will prove itself in the future to be the most effectual way may differ from any of the expedients which suggest themselves now. But hope now points to some substantial agreement between nations strong enough to enforce their joint will, for the control of irritability, the repression of covetousness, the punishment of aggression and inhumanity. In the meantime, that any two nations should refer a dispute to arbitration, that any single nation should interfere to protect a weak people against aggression, is a step gained upon the better path. The Christian preacher is doing his part if he urges that a Christian people should cherish the Christian temper,

and be ready to act upon it with honesty and directness, when action is called for by a crisis in international politics.

2. "But," says Dr. Mozley—to quote him once more—"the moral principles of private life cannot be applied to the conduct of a nation. In an individual, humility and generosity are commendable qualities. An individual's abandonment of his right is what the very words grammatically mean—the individual sacrificing himself; but a nation's abandonment of its rights means the individual sacrificing the nation; for the nation only acts through individuals." I admit that this objection points to limitations of generosity in the action of a Government which are not equally necessary in the action of an individual. It would not be generosity for a sovereign or a minister to surrender possessions or claims of his country, as if they were exclusively his own. The nation must be generous, and not its representative, if a generous national act is to be done. And the nation itself must consider many things before it allows itself to act on an impulse of generosity. But there is nothing to prevent a nation from being generous. The spirit

prevailing amongst a people may be generous or ignoble, considerate or arrogant, contented or covetous, careful or careless about justice, jealously irritable or magnanimous. And not nations only, but individuals equally, find themselves constrained to consider many things before they yield to good impulses. Before a man gives to him that asks, he has to consider whether he is free to give away what belongs to his wife and children, and whether his gift would do harm or good to the receiver; before he turns the left cheek to him that has struck him on the right, he has to consider whether by so doing he would give encouragement to violence. But such prudential restraints on action leave the motive unimpeached. I deny, therefore, that there is anything in this difficulty to discourage the cultivation of a Christian temper in a people, or the expression of such a temper in national conduct.

3. It is urged, again, that some process has been necessary for the re-adjustment of the place and condition of nations in the world, and that war is often the only effectual process for such re-adjustment. The course of history, including the most recent, shews

much to support this view. It is not easy to say how the consolidation of Germany, how the unity and independence of Italy, how the extinction of slavery in the United States, how the downfall of the Second Empire in France, could have been won for the respective nations and for mankind without war. Assuredly there have been changes in the world, for which the wars they have cost have not been too heavy a price to pay. Such examples are fit arguments,—I should be inclined to say, conclusive arguments,—in defence of the position that it is not necessarily wrong to go to war. The cause for which I am pleading is not that of the renunciation of war, but that of justice and consideration and goodwill between nations. At the same time, it could scarcely be conceded by advocates of this cause, that a people should resort to a war in cold calculation as a means for bringing about changes which it may think desirable. It should wait, one would say, until a war be forced upon it, recognising that it may be its duty to go to war rather than consent to surrender some high interest. A war thus undertaken does not demoralise the politics of the world,

any more than it blunts the conscience of the nation which undertakes it. It is open to faith, however, to feel sure that the Divine hand will know how to bring about the desirable changes, without violent and desolating struggles between nations which agree in respecting the principles of justice and concord. There is nothing more deadening to spiritual conviction than to say, "This course is indefensible, no doubt, but the necessities of life compel me to take it." The believer in God will say, "Either this course is not to be taken, whatever it may cost to repudiate it, or it is right for me at this given moment," and he will always be inclined to trust to God to shew the more excellent way to those who desire to walk in it. Divine Providence, we may be sure, has not exhausted its expedients for the government of mankind.

4. To mention one more difficulty:—the value attached to national feeling, and the fear that the nation might suffer loss by any diminution amongst the people of exclusive attachment to its interests, have a considerable effect in discouraging the growth of international sympathies. Patriotism has been



greatly stimulated by wars and international jealousies, and we feel sure that patriotism is a good thing. There would be something to make us pause in the promotion of any tendency, if it were likely to cause us to love our country less. But is the love of the family necessarily the weaker in those who love their country with ardour? Surely we of this land have not found it so, and therefore we need not fear that the roots of our patriotism would be destroyed, or that it would wither for lack of nourishment, if it were made a duty of our lives to regard other nations, not with an evil eye, not even with repellent indifference, but with the utmost possible goodwill. "America," it has been said recently, "is a religion to an American." And it is not a succession of wars, but the contemplation of the materials of boundless hope and pride, that makes patriotism a passion in the United States. There is nothing, in truth, so inspiring as hope. But the Englishman has in the history behind him uncounted treasures, to make his country precious to him. To him it may well be said,

"Love thou thy land, with love far-brought  
From out the storied past."

Nor could we consent to admit that the future also is not ours, for as much glory as that of our past. But the future need not be the less glorious in prospect or when it comes, if we should be led to think of our England as standing, not against the world but for the world, as condemning by its own generous policy all rapacity and oppression, as a powerful and persuasive witness to the principle of international fellowship, as capable of making sacrifices for the honour of justice and the good of the human race.

That, my brethren, is the ambition which our God, the Father of the Son of man, is bidding us entertain. By the characteristic influences of our time we are called upon to have done with exclusive and arrogant nationalism. Whether the Christianity that attracts us be the simple faith of the first days, free from the accretions of the later ages, or that which makes its boast of the name Catholic; if we are impressed by the expansion of intercourse, or the multiplied comparisons of languages and manners and religions, or the demonstrations of the gradual growth of moral conceptions, which illustrate the epoch in which we live; we

may hear from all sides the monition that our politics should be larger and more human than they have been in the days gone by.

There should be no dissension on this ground between the Church and non-Christian moralists. But let us who are of the Church, believing that we have the surest sanctions and the highest standard, be emulous that the Church should judge with a quickened sense of responsibility of national questions and national motives. Christian judgment will not fail to recognise that progress has been made here in England, whilst it will urge that much yet remains to be done. Let it encourage us, rather than promote self-complacency, to note with satisfaction that English feeling towards Ireland has become more Christian than it used to be,—more willing to make allowance, more ready to confess faults and to offer reparation, more heartily desirous of concord and fellowship. And, so far as prevailing motives are concerned, I believe it may be justly affirmed that our recent action towards Egypt has not been prompted by covetousness, or vain self-assertion, or contempt of

the weak. From the highest point of judgment, it is by their motives that nations as well as individuals will be judged. It is not, I repeat, a question of war or no war, but of just and beneficent aims or self-seeking. It is wholesome for us to take credit to ourselves where we can, that we may be strengthened in the resolute adoption of a moral standard in international dealings. There is no chance of our thinking that all is as it should be with us in these matters. China is still a name of opprobrium to us. We need to be nerved at this moment to keep decent good faith with that country, and to undo the policy of wars which no one now has the hardihood to defend, and which, in the opinion of many whom it pains to confess it, deserve the name of crimes.

An inspiration of high Christian purpose breathed into our feelings towards foreign peoples would have a vivifying influence for our general moral life. One of the lights of modern Oxford, in his admirable attempt to adapt the greatest work of Hebrew prophecy to the use of our schools for the people, has these words, "If but a few pupils out of many could get some conception of the

course of man's history and development as a whole, what access to a new life, what an extending of their horizons, what a suggestion of hope and courage! What a blessing there is in whatever extricates them from the misery of narrow thoughts and makes them live with the life of the race! . . . The power and animation and consolation in those thoughts and studies which, beginning by giving us a hold upon a single great work, end with giving us a hold of the history of the human spirit, and the course, drift, and scope of the career of our race as a whole, cannot be overestimated." That is surely true. And the feeling that in the sight of God our race is a whole, and that one section of it is bound to act towards other sections as a member of a body towards other members, will certainly tell upon our home-politics, and forbid us to acquiesce in narrow and debasing traditions. When the absurdities of party strife are excused on the ground that we cannot imagine how England could be governed except by parties, we shall be the more inclined to believe that the Power which governs our country and all countries, is not

tied to unreal and demoralising expedients. Observers have already noted indications of an approaching modification of domestic politics, due to the deliberate introduction of moral ends into the scope of political action. At home as well as abroad we are called to advance in faith, bringing institutions and practices fearlessly to the test of the Divine standard revealed to us.

Above all, our faith as Christians, by gaining its proper outlook and its high pretensions, will receive an accession of energy which will be felt in every fibre of our consciousness. One reason why our faith is valetudinarian is that it is "cabined, cribbed, confined." We look up to Christ with the less reverence because we shrink from holding that the kingdom of the world has become his kingdom and his Father's. There is not a humble Christian, not a private student preparing for his work of service to God in Church and State, who will not be strengthened in his conflict with the temptations which beset him by thinking of himself as a sworn soldier of the army which is to reduce the whole world, with its unnumbered powers and activities, to the

obedience of Christ. Of old the faith, "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship thee, O Lord; and glorify thy name," inspired the prayer, "Turn thee then unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and help the son of thine handmaid." Let every one who feels his weakness try to cherish the conviction, that it is not for the Christian to cower before any interest, however formidable, or to be baffled by any problem, however intricate. Such loyal confidence in the heavenly Leader will have its reward, let him be sure, in encouragement and strength.



## VIII.

### PREPARATION FOR WAR.

(Preached at Christ Church, St. Marylebone, 22d February 1885.)

“Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.”

MATTHEW xxviii. 18.

I HAVE asked myself whether it could be well that I should seek to turn your thoughts this morning into another channel than that in which for many days they have been steadily running.

The Church season offers a subject somewhat urgently for our contemplation. We are at the beginning of Lent; and we are invited to observe with reverent interest the long solitary watch of the Son of man in the wilderness. Called by his Baptism to a ministry never before laid on man, and bidden to speak to his countrymen with authority in his Father's name, Jesus of Nazareth fled into solitude, that he might stand for a while

face to face with the work set before him ; and there he was tempted or put to the proof, that it might be seen whether he could be perfectly true as the Son to the Father's will. The rightful supremacy of the motions of the Spirit over all the suggestions of the flesh, as illustrated in the victory of the Son of man over the tempter, is presented at this time to our study. Shall we leave this to occupy ourselves with events of the day ? It is a common feeling, and one with which I have a real sympathy, that we come to Church out of the distractions of the world that we may gain spiritual refreshment and strength from the contemplation of heavenly things. Here moreover those who differ about politics, and are perhaps hotly opposed to each other, sit side by side to listen reverently to that word of God of which we all confess the authority ; is it not undesirable that the antagonism of the political arena should be imported into this sanctuary of fellowship ? The safest course, it may be thought, and the one prescribed by religion, is to say nothing here about the Soudan and public affairs, but to keep to Christ and our own souls.

But the preacher does not willingly turn away from the things which are occupying his hearers' minds with absorbing power; nor, I am bold to say, ought he to do so. And, whilst I am thus attracted by the anxieties, the admirations, the resolves, to which all Englishmen are now surrendering themselves, this great word of the Lord Jesus Christ comes before my eye, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Contemplate Jesus Christ? Yes: this is what every Christian ought at all times to do. But that is to contemplate One who claims all the kingdoms of the earth as subject to his Kingdom. This saying is a continual protest and warning against the notion that our lives can be divided into two parts, the religious part and the secular part. The kings of the earth are subject to Christ: this principle or fact forbids us to assume, either that we can deal with the things of the earth without bringing to bear upon them our allegiance to Christ, or that we can meditate upon Christ our Lord and Saviour without asking him what he would have us do amongst the things of the earth. It encourages us to bring the

Soudan and Egypt and our forces, and the memories of the brave men who have bled and died for us, and the interests and responsibilities of our country, into the sanctuary of God, in order that the Divine will may return with us into the world to constrain and guide and support us in our English consciousness and in the performance of our English duties.

And that hero of the African drama, upon whose strange career the curtain has now fallen, claims our admiration both as a Christian and as a soldier. Nor can it be said that in him the two callings were casually joined and ran side by side without mingling; his soldiership was an instrument of his Christianity. We have a very strong feeling against the shedding of blood; and it is assumed that to kill is so incongruous with the religion of peace that to those who really care about Christianity it ought to be peculiarly revolting. We cannot doubt that in General Gordon, one of the most compassionate of men, whose pity was easily called forth into tender benevolent action, there was that which shrank with repugnance from the slaying and wounding of his fellow-men.

But it was characteristic of his sincere and primitive type of Christianity that he held himself to be no less strictly obeying Christ in putting men to death when the occasion called for such action, than when he was giving his own life or saving the lives of others. He could not have been an effective soldier, no, nor a great benefactor of peoples and races, unless he had been thus resolute not to bear the sword in vain. A necessity of warfare was to him a commandment of God ; and Gordon would not have made the unique impression which he has done upon the mind of the English people if he had not held this stern and simple faith. He was profoundly religious ; he had, to some extent, the mind of a mystic and a recluse ; but he was equally practical, and he applied all his belief straight to action. I need not say that it was not given to him to solve the problems of life by which we are troubled ; we should go in vain to him for speculative guidance : but some knots which we find hard to untie he cut, and he allowed no enigmas or contradictions to stand in the way of his trust in the goodwill of God. In Gordon, restoring order by victorious war-

fare in China, suppressing the slave-trade in the Soudan, holding Khartoum by his single energy through these weary months against besiegers and betrayers, and all the while feeding his soul on the Bible and the Imitation of Christ, we have an impressive witness against the separation of the roughest work of the world from a devout and musing faith in Christ.

Think of the force with which such a testimony must appeal to the hearts and imaginations of our soldiers! No one doubts that we must have soldiers still. Those who are most ready to denounce any particular war do not go so far as to urge that we should give up our army altogether, and trust implicitly to the good feeling of our neighbours. We are daily sending out fresh detachments of our small military force, and each detachment as it departs leaves unsleeping anxieties behind it. For many months to come we shall be thinking of these soldiers of ours, hungering for daily news of them, watching their fortunes and their achievements. And the soldier's life has its own temptations. We are not now, indeed, learning for the first time that soldiers may

be gentle and virtuous, cherishing the faith and adorned with the graces of the devout Christian. The time has gone by when it was taken for granted that a soldier must be reckless and profane. But how can we be thankful enough, with reference to the lives and characters of those to whom the honour of our country is so specially committed, for such an image as that of Gordon, surrounded with so penetrating a halo of greatness and of fame? For every man in our army, whatever his rank, whatever his creed, the example of Gordon bridges over the space between the fighting man's business and the following of Christ. It effectually exorcises the notion that one who reads his Bible and tries to follow Christ must be effeminate or unpractical, unfitted for the world as it is. It makes it clear that men of Gordon's character are just such as are wanted by the world as it is, in order that it may be made a better and a happier world.

The very sayings by which men have been misled into thinking of Christ as exclusively mild, and as teaching a soft and tender morality which only recluses could practise, should in truth convey an almost



opposite impression. He no more meant that his disciples should obey in the letter the precept, "Resist not evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," than he meant that they should give to every one who asked till they had nothing left to give, or that they were to try to win his favour by hating father and mother, wife and child. The sayings are intentionally startling; they are signs of a certain vehemence of exhortation, driving the principles which Christ sought to enforce in among the facts of life. For any followers of his who thought they were bound by his teaching to let wicked men do what they pleased without restraint or punishment, our Lord would have had the reproach with which he rebuked the Twelve, "Are ye so without understanding?" What he meant was that a disciple of his was not to indulge the retaliatory, vindictive, self-considering spirit. The ideal of behaviour for a follower of Christ was that he should so restrain and suppress this spirit as to be able—so far as he alone was concerned—to turn the left cheek to one who smote the right. But the precept was not intended to prevent any man

from fighting against a wrong-doer. It is true that it pleased the Father that the Son of man should not be seen defending himself or others with bodily force ; the nearest approach to violence in his action was the driving the traders with a scourge of small cords out of the temple ; it is characteristic of him that he submits and does not retaliate : and we are bound to give its due weight to this feature of the life of Christ. But I daresay the Pharisees felt that they might as well have been struck with a stick as assailed with the storm of invectives and curses—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"—which Jesus discharged against them ; and he threatened that his Father would do more than reproach them,—"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." No, Jesus was very far indeed from intimating that in his kingdom men might do wrong freely, and he would forbid those who obeyed him to touch them.

In those days it might have been said just as well as now, that a war is cruelly indiscriminating, and makes no pretence of proportioning punishment to guilt. "These sheep, what have they done?" There is enough, assuredly, in war, to make us regard it always with a certain horror. We look across to those far African deserts, and we see brave savages falling in hundreds and thousands under the hail of our rifles, but avenged, it might be said, by the sacrifice on our side of lives, one of which we may be excused for valuing more than those of myriads of Arabs. It is all difficult for us entirely to understand. Certainly, we ought to avoid and prevent the miseries of war if we can. The vindictive spirit, the lust of conquest, becomes hideously criminal in the lurid light of massacre and ruin. We may hear Christ warning nations no less than individuals against fighting for mere revenge, or sport, or covetousness. The Gospel says to us, in public as in private, "As much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." But it does not lie in us only. Nothing is more evident than that the age of war has not passed away. It is still a law of the

world, that nations should have to defend themselves. And the defence of rights, the defence of what we are bound to protect, the defence of honour, may involve of necessity all the miseries of war. If this is so,—and it seems impossible to question it,—a nation will not become the more timid and shrinking as it becomes the more Christian. It is not pre-eminently Christian to set a high value on human life. Regard for life,—solicitude for one's own life, hesitation about taking the lives of others,—does indeed grow naturally with the growth of civilisation. The common virtues inevitably foster it. But it is a sentiment not to be trusted to the uttermost, which may rather need to be held in check. Mere human life is not necessarily so beautiful or so happy or so good that we should be bound to grieve greatly for some diminution of its amount or some shortening of its duration. The question has been started, in these highly speculative days of ours, "Is life worth living?" And the consideration of it may at least warn us not to make sure that a somewhat earlier death is necessarily an appalling evil, for savage or civilised man, for the saint or the sinner.

One of the Christian Fathers, St. Ambrose, wrote a treatise on the Advantage of Dying ; and he argues with much force that, in the case of a good man, we may hope that when he dies he goes to a better world, and, in the case of a bad man, by dying sooner he does the less harm to the world and to himself. The modern Christian has another hope,—that, if the bad man is spared, as we say, he may perhaps repent : but we are learning now to trust the future of each man, in this life and the next, rather to God than to chance. And the dying itself is easier and less painful on the battlefield than on the deathbed. We do not act and feel by mere calculation ; we sorrow and think it mournful when the Stewart or the Earle is struck down in the moment of victory ; but we confess, if we are to come to calculation, that such death is more eligible by far than many a death for which there is no public grief. These reflections are not, I think, futile, when we are contemplating war, as a contingency which we are bound to face, in the light of our faith in Christ. There is nothing that so undermines a real faith, nothing so demoralising, as to hold that things are wrong

but that we have to do them. It is never necessary to do what is wrong. It is the glory of Christian martyrdom to die rather than sin. Those who speak of war as if to enter into it were necessarily unchristian ought to die rather than consent to it. And it is a feeble and mistaken policy to dwell on the horrors of war in the endeavour to frighten people from it, when it may at any moment be the confessed duty of the nation to go into it resolutely and with a good conscience. What is right and useful is to condemn, not war, but insensate pride ; not war, but oppression ; not war, but disregard of the rights and feelings of our fellow-men ; not war, but ambition and vanity and covetousness. Admitting that we may have to fight at a terrible cost, let us not shut our eyes to the good that may come, and that manifestly has come, from war. How can we admire Gordon, and see nothing but evil in the environment which made him what he was ? Philosophers talk of militarism and industrialism, and it is well that they should do their utmost to make industrialism fair and attractive in the eyes of men ; for they will never persuade the unsophisticated Christian conscience to

honour a benevolent and upright trader with the passion of reverence with which it looks up to the man who flew to Khartoum on the wings of military duty, and stood at bay there, daring to kill and to die, till he fell in apparent defeat, knowing that "God had not promised him that he should succeed."

It seems to be not without a gracious purpose that such a man has been given to us at this hour. He is more precious to us dead than he could well have been were he alive. A time is upon us, when we may need faith, courage, sternness, more than softness and good-nature and devotion to the arts of production and exchange. There is as yet no earthly power set over the nations, to which we can have recourse for the compulsory but peaceful settlement of difficulties. We cannot apply to any Court of Chancery to settle under what trusteeship Egypt is to be placed, to assign to France and to England, to bondholders and to natives, their respective dues, and to enforce its decisions irresistibly upon dissatisfied parties. There is no Boundary Commissioner, backed by a power to which all must submit, to draw lines, in the interest of the common good, between Russia



and Afghanistan, between German Colonists and English Colonists, between France and China. The hope of a Council of States, through which "the common sense of most should keep a fretful realm in awe," which should use the combined strength of many to impose justice on each, is diminished rather than increased, as empires become larger and more unmanageable. For the present, the only Power that controls the States of the world is invisible in heaven. We are here in Church to acknowledge that Power, to invoke its aid, to submit ourselves to it in joyful obedience. We keep our ancient season of Lent, that we may impress upon ourselves that man doth not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and that it is better for us to be humbled and proved than to grow luxurious and self-confident. The special discipline of our people and our rulers in these days lies in our being confronted by overwhelming responsibilities. Prudence plainly warns us not wilfully to increase them ; but experience tells us as plainly that we cannot evade them at our pleasure. If ever our country could shape its own destinies at the will of a power-

ful ruler, it cannot do so now. The forces at work in the world and in our own empire are too strong and complex to yield to the control of any Minister or Cabinet. Our hope is in the Hand that guides, our safety is in thinking more of duty than of safety, and in committing ourselves to the rule and protection of the Eternal Righteousness and Love.

It may be possible for those who look on the outside only of national conduct to confound a readiness to incur danger for the sake of interests confided to us, with a spirit of insolence and aggression. But the two things are essentially distinct, down to the very roots ; and the duty laid upon us at a time like this is to follow after the one and to purge ourselves of the other. We shall do both successfully by looking up in the simplicity and self-surrender of faith to God in heaven ; to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Maker of all the races of men, the Father of all men. It is evident that we cannot see far before us. The prayer that is so often best for us as individuals suits us equally as a nation,—

“Keep thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene ; one step enough for me.”

But to discern even this step, amidst new

complications and formidable contingencies, may need all the insight that it may please God to give, in answer to our most earnest prayers, to those who lead us ; and to take the step when it is discerned, may need all the courage that comes of faith. It would be a shame for this nation to falter, out of mere weakness or worship of material interests. What could be more encouraging, what could at the same time call us more seriously to a grave carefulness of action, than the rallying of our Colonies round the mother-country at this crisis ? It says to us that, if we are worthy to lead, there are those who will follow ; and it brings home to us at the same time, with a new force, the manifold greatness of the interests entrusted to our keeping. The world is much changed ; everything is on a vaster scale than ever before ; but the laws of the unseen world are not changed. Faith remains the one root of all right action : faith in a God who is above all our knowing and whom yet we know, if we should not rather say that he knows us ; faith in the God whom his Son Jesus Christ has revealed to us, and who has placed that Son at his own right hand ; faith in a Being

altogether just and good, who is Light and in whom is no darkness at all. Such a faith inspires at the same time courage and fear. Trusting in God, what is to hinder us from going forward? what right have we to yield to depression or gloom? But we shall be afraid of the desires and devices of our own hearts, afraid of putting our own vanity and pride in the place of God's manifested will. And the same faith will bind us all, with an urgency in proportion to our seriousness, to the loyal following of Jesus Christ, in every part of our lives, in public and in private duty. Each humblest person may strive, as he thinks of his country's task and destiny, to be true to his inheritance as one of its sons. He may nourish himself upon its best traditions; he may seek a high-minded unworldly temper; he may count it a disgrace to be brought under the power of fleshly appetites and passions. Faith in the one Lord will draw us together and give us the joy and strength of unity. And all that we render of devotion and service to the God of our fathers and of our country will be repaid to us abundantly, in the ennobling of personal lives and the heightening of domestic and social happiness.

## IX.

### PROPERTY.

(Preached before the University of Oxford, 14th January 1883.)

“The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”—ACTS iv. 32.

THERE probably never was an age in which the rights of property were regarded by people in general with so much reverence as they are at the present time. Private property is declared to be the main foundation of our social system; the protection of it to be the chief end of all the institutions of government. We may often observe in the language used about property that touch of emotion which has been said to turn morality into religion. People speak with enthusiasm of the magic of ownership. If you want to regenerate a society that is falling to pieces, give to every one, they say, something to

own, and let him own it as tightly as possible. The alienation of Church endowments is deprecated, not only in the interest of the Church, but for the yet more solemn reason that such a policy would tend to disturb the security even of private property itself. This veneration of property betrays itself in many incidental indications. It is noticed that the legal punishments inflicted for the violation of property are excessively severe, compared with those which are given for other offences. In households of every degree the claim made on private persons for public or common expenditure is apt to be resented as a hostile exaction, which limits in an objectionable manner the natural right of every one to do what he likes with his own; and rates and taxes are paid much less willingly than a tradesman's bill of larger amount. It is in England especially, more than elsewhere, that private property and its rights have won this authority and sacredness.

Many of the most religious Christians are as ready as any unbeliever to give to private property a place amongst the objects of their veneration, and to pay their worship at its altar. But they ought to meet with

troublesome stumbling-blocks in the pages of their sacred book. The whole strain of the teaching of Christ may be said to run counter to the glorification of private ownership and of the right of every one to do what he likes with his own. Our Lord inculcated upon his followers a certain fear of riches; not the modern respectful awe, but a distrust as of a danger or an enemy. He warned them that they could not serve God and Mammon—Mammon being the personification of riches. He taught them not to lay up treasure upon the earth, but to look at the fowls of the air, which do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and to consider the lilies of the field, which toil not nor spin. He repelled a rich young man who desired to become his follower, by requiring him to sell all that he had and to give the money to the poor. A man's life, he said, consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. He drew a derisive picture of a man proposing to enjoy himself on the property which he had accumulated, but summoned away from his possessions by the sudden call of death,—  
“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself,



and is not rich toward God ;” and another picture of a rich man and a beggar, the one tormented in flames, the other comforted, in the world beyond the grave. He himself, it would seem, had as little private property as Lazarus ; the Son of man had not where to lay his head. St. Paul bids Christians lay to heart this feature of the life of Jesus Christ, how that, though rich, he for our sakes became poor.

What are we, who call Christ our Master, to make of this teaching, which seems to conflict so sharply with our English reverence for property ?—But there is more than teaching for us to deal with ; there is the actual life of the Christian society when it was first organised. When the Church came into existence on the Day of Pentecost, its members began their Christian course by surrendering their private property. They threw what they had into the common stock, and none of them kept back anything as his own. “ Look,” it might well be said to the modern Church, “ to the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.” How are we to be excused from regarding with peculiar reverence the

first fresh product of the Spirit which is the Breath of the living Body of Christ? We know that the communism of the first days did not last long. It may have been only an experiment of a few weeks. But, however brief was its duration, the force of it as a testimony lives for ever. No Christian can possibly allege that private property was laid as the foundation of the sacred society to which he belongs; no Christian can deny that the Breath, as of a rushing mighty wind, which had power to organise the living Church out of scattered and unpromising elements, blew away those instincts of appropriation which in our eyes have a mystical authority. It is not to be hastily assumed that the Christian theory of brotherhood broke down, and the original Christian life was one of the failures of history, because the communistic form of it was but temporary. Some things are intended to be temporary; and in all that proceeds from Christ we are bound to look for the spirit and to be regardless of the outer form. With the spirit, at all events, of the Christian communism we have to reckon; we have not done with that, when we have pronounced the form to be

transient. If we have any loyalty to our origins, we shall consider anxiously what relation the Pentecostal Spirit, as manifested in the primary Christian life, bears to our modern customs and opinions. On this point a highly respected economical writer, M. de Laveleye, has been moved to say, "If Christianity were taught and understood in accordance with the spirit of its Founder, the existing social organisation would not last for a single day." He holds this strong opinion, because our modern institutions appear to him to be so unfavourable to the poor, and to leave the great mass of those whom we call our brothers oppressed by needless disadvantages.

The Christian spirit, if it were to follow its own precedents, might be expected to work gradually, and not in the way of summary revolution. But work in some way it must, when it is genuine and in force, upon all arrangements by which the poor are kept low, and the rich comforted in exclusive possession. We can see signs, thank God, that that spirit is not dead, and that it is moving uneasily under the mountainous load of our inherited system of ownership and

use. Individuals here and there awake to a startled consciousness that what they have is not their own, and that they are bound in the sight of God to act as faithful stewards of their possessions ; and then they see themselves called to the extremely difficult task of planning how to give and spend, so as to make their property of most use to their fellow-men. Individuals act thus without exciting much alarm, and generally draw to themselves more praise than blame by their action. But a strong and combative prejudice is roused against those who advocate any alteration, to be made either by voluntary effort or by changes of the law, in the relations of class to class. Such proposals come, as a matter of course, from persons whose sympathies are with the poor ; the rich having little occasion to find fault with the customs or legal arrangements into which modern society has drifted. Schemes of socialism or communism, distasteful as they are to the class in possession, and economically crude and impracticable as they may be, are the product of a feeling which, if not professedly Christian, is Christian in its nature ; for they are almost always put for-

ward by sincere enthusiasts who long to lift up those that are down. It is Christian benevolence that has suggested the various projects of the day for securing to the men who work with their hands a share in the fortunes of the business in which their labour is engaged. It is a Christian zeal on behalf of the poor that breathes in the pages of the eloquent American, whose book on *Poverty and Progress* has proved so fascinating to many generous hearts. The theory that the land of a nation belongs of right to the community, and ought not to be appropriated by individuals, is not a new one, but Mr. George has given freshness to it; and his demand that the community should be put as quickly as possible in possession of rights which in his view could never lapse, though it startles many who are disposed to sympathise with his aims, may be said to have a ring of the unflinching boldness which must have animated the members of the original Christian society.

The Christian spirit of partnership makes no distinction between land and other property. "As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices

of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles' feet : and distribution was made unto each according as any one had need." And the prevailing tendency of modern legislation has been and still is to assimilate land to other property by making the ownership of it more and more absolute, and by facilitating sale and division. Those who desire to see peasant proprietors multiplied are in favour of this assimilation. But those who hold that the land ought to belong to neither great nor small proprietors, but to the State, draw a broad line of distinction between land and other possessions. They maintain for the most part that by a natural and indefeasible right the land belongs to the race which happens to live within its borders, in whatever way that race may have come to occupy it, whilst they leave it to be assumed that all other things belong by a similar right to the individuals who happen to have legal possession of them. It is easy and safe to speak of the rights of owners, when we mean by them the powers which the law confers and recognises, and which the law at any moment may change. But this interpretation obviously does not satisfy

those who affirm that, against all the enactments of our laws, the land belongs of right to the whole people. And it has been common with jurists and others who have philosophised on this subject to assume that there is such a thing as a natural right of ownership, not created by, or dependent upon, the law, but to which the law should aim at conforming itself. It is said, for example, that a man has a natural right to have something of his own, because he has a right to what is necessary to the development of his nature, and human nature is developed by private ownership. But what is gained by such a definition as this? Nothing but confusion seems to be produced by putting any such imaginary right behind or beneath the actual rights which the law defines. I do not mean to say that there is no such thing as an ideal justice, which law should seek, in its limited sphere, to represent and enforce. That is another matter. Such justice need not be regarded as composed of inherent rights, but rather as the perfect order of human relations. We may decline to embarrass ourselves with a philosophy of rights. If we look back to the origin of



property, we can trace it to actual occupation. There is in human nature an elementary instinct of appropriation, or one which we may resolve into the still more elementary instincts of appetite and self-preservation. A man lusts, and desires to have; he naturally covets whatever pleases him or gives him an advantage. He takes what he can and keeps hold of what he has got, and resists any one who would take it from him. But as soon as the will of the community is organised, it determines through law what a man may have, and on what terms he may hold it. If it occurred to a man, as it probably did not, in the hunting or the pastoral stage, to take possession of a piece of land for himself, his fellow-tribesmen would not permit any such appropriation. The tribe as a whole needed the land for the general use, and it was nowhere in very early days partitioned amongst individuals. The researches of our own time have established the fact that the collective owning of land has prevailed everywhere in the primitive stages of human life. It still subsists in many of the less progressive parts of the world. And this discovery has given a

strong stimulus to the exertions of those who hold that the land ought again to be brought under collective or public ownership; although stress may reasonably be laid upon the fact that civilisation and progress have everywhere promoted or been promoted by the division and private holding of the land. If one party can say, "This appropriation of the soil by individuals is only a recent abuse, and the nationalisation of the land, which reason recommends, would be but a recurrence to what has been the absolutely universal practice of mankind;" their opponents can reply, "Why should we go back, from a condition which is everywhere associated with the higher civilisation, to one which admittedly belongs, like many other customs which we have outgrown, to the primitive stages of human history?" This argument ought surely to have weight. The Christian principle, that no one is to call what he possesses his own, makes no distinction, as I said, between land and other possessions; and the contemplation of the Pentecostal communism certainly gives no direct support to the proposal that the State should resume the collective ownership of the land. They

that had houses and lands sold them, and brought the money into the common stock. But the fact that the tenure of land—say, in this country—has been passing by slow processes of change, which are not yet complete, from collective ownership into the condition of private property, is one which should modify some opinions and much sentiment. It is scarcely fifty years since Coleridge affirmed with energy that in England, as in Judea, the land belonged to the State, and was but lent to its nominal owners. “The voice of the trumpets,” he said, “is not indeed heard in this country. But no less intelligibly is it declared by the spirit and history of our laws that the possession of a property not connected with special duties, a property not fiduciary or official but arbitrary and unconditional, was in the sight of our forefathers the brand of a Jew and an alien; not the distinction nor the right nor the honour of an English baron or gentleman.”

From the Christian point of view, it is the right of the many that is sacred, rather than the right of the individual. If we ask, “On what ground may I call my piece of

land, my house, my book, my money, my own?"—there is one answer which history and law combine to give to this question. They say, "Because it has come to you, and remained with you, under conditions which the general opinion has sanctioned, and is at this moment ready to enforce." That answer defines the only intelligible right of personal ownership. The general opinion, to which the sanction or even the creation of private right is thus traced, may have been formed by various influences. It varies from age to age. At one time it sanctioned the owning of slaves. Now, taught by Christian feeling, it has abolished that right. Formerly it sanctioned what has been called the subjection of women. Within the last year, by giving to married women the control of what belongs to them, it has modified very seriously in this country, not only the relations of the sexes, but the rights of property. These are but greater instances of that free handling of private rights, which the progress of civilisation and the necessities of the commonwealth prevent from ever falling into abeyance. The Christian answer to that question is different from, but not contradictory to, the

answer given by history and law. "You may call what you have your own, in the sense that God has entrusted it to your individual stewardship." The kingdom of heaven knows no other theory of ownership but this. The theory makes no distinction, I repeat, between land and other things. It does not abolish private property. It said of a piece of land, before the early Christian communism had yet died away, "Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?" It fastens upon the individual a definite personal responsibility for the employment of whatever he has. His control over land or house or money, whatever it be that the law of his country and of his age assigns and secures to him, is one of the opportunities of action afforded him; and all those opportunities are talents, committed to him by his Lord that he may make them bear interest. He may use the phrase "my own," but it is one which will fill him with a solemn rather than a self-complacent feeling. "This is mine, because from me, and not from any one else, my Lord will demand an account of its use."

The strictly voluntary character of the

Pentecostal communism is a feature which it has in common with some of the socialistic schemes of the modern age, but which distinguishes it from others which propose to take from the rich without their consent for the benefit of the poor. It may be alleged also with some plausibility that it has another feature in common with subsequent socialistic experiments, that of speedy failure. The history of such enterprise in general will be pathetic or ridiculous to us, according as our reverence for benevolent enthusiasm or our contempt for the want of worldly wisdom predominates. But was the early Christian communism in any reasonable sense a failure? If we consult an author who has written on the origin of Christianity from a loftily independent point of view and with an immense and essentially modern acquaintance with general history, he will give us two opinions, flatly contradicting each other, to choose from, or to reconcile by any interpretation or compromise which we may find practicable. There is at all events much that is instructive in both M. Renan's conclusions. Let me quote portions of them. "It was a piece of extreme good fortune for nascent Christianity

that its first attempts at association were so soon shattered [by the persecution of the year 37]. Attempts of this kind breed abuses so flagrant that communistic establishments are condemned to fall to pieces in a very short time, or to disown quickly the principle which created them. . . . The common chest at Jerusalem was not sufficient to feed the poor. From all parts of the world it was necessary to send help to save those noble mendicants from dying of hunger. Communism had created at Jerusalem an incurable pauperism, and a complete incapacity for great enterprises. . . . The decadence of the Church of Jerusalem was in fact rapid. It is the peculiarity of institutions founded on communism to have a first brilliant moment,—for communism always implies great exaltation,—but to degenerate quickly, communism being contrary to human nature.” So severe, though pity is blended with the severity, is M. Renan’s judgment of the first experiment of Christian life. But only a few pages before, he had spoken differently. Having pronounced Christianity to be essentially communistic, he refers to the difficulties which arose in the Church



about distribution as having led to the creation of the diaconate, "the oldest, the most effective, of Holy Orders." "The deacons," he says, "were the best preachers of Christianity . . . They did much more than the Apostles. They were the creators of all that was most solid and most durable in Christianity. Very early, women were admitted to this employment. They bore, as in our time, the name of *sisters*. First, they were widows: after a time, virgins were preferred for this office. The primitive Church was guided in all this by a wonderful tact. With a science that was profound because it came from the heart, those good and simple men laid the foundations of the great and peculiarly Christian work of charity. They had nothing to serve them as a model for such institutions. A vast ministry of beneficence and mutual aid, in which both sexes brought their different qualities and combined their efforts for the relief of human suffering—this was the holy creation which issued from the labour of those two or three first years." And then M. Renan proceeds to moralise thus: "The modern spirit has been very severe towards cenobitism. We

have forgotten that it is in the common life that the soul of man has tasted most joy. The psalm, 'Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!' has ceased to be ours. But when modern individualism has borne its last fruits; when humanity, dwarfed, dismal, impuissant, shall return to great institutions and their strong discipline, when our paltry shop-keeping society, say rather when our world of pigmies, shall have been driven out with scourges by the heroic and idealistic portions of humanity, then life in common will be prized again as much as ever. A number of great things, such as science, will organise themselves in a monastic form. . . . The splendid ideal traced by the author of the Acts shall be inscribed as a prophetic revelation over the entrance of the paradise of humanity, — 'All that believed were together, and had all things common ; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And breaking bread with one accord, they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.'" Which of the two speakers are we to believe, M. Renan the impassioned artist, caught by the

contagious exaltation of the brilliant moment which he is contemplating, and made to prophesy, or M. Renan the severe modern critic, recording disenchantment and laying bare the illusions of human life? What was, in effect and in its fruits, the Pentecostal spirit? Was it healthful, creative, exemplary; or did it produce, as a matter of course, exhaustion and pauperism and moral decay in the Church of Jerusalem? Does its light shine to attract us, or to warn us? That is a question of great interest to us Christians. The view which, as it seems to me, would combine what is true in both M. Renan's comments, is something like this—The communism of the first days was not an attempt to organise communistic institutions; it was the spontaneous expression of an extraordinary enthusiasm, and may be compared with the speaking with tongues. There is no sign in the *Acts* that the Apostles made any attempt to organise life in common, much less to enforce it. The enthusiasm of the Pentecostal days succeeded for a time in bringing a certain number of persons into a marvellous outward unity. When the inevitable difficulties, which make extreme communism on a large scale

impracticable, began to give trouble in the Jerusalem Church, the forms of common life yielded easily without needing to be shattered. The sharing in a common stock gave way soon, with the consent of the Apostles, to liberal relief of the poorer members of the Church. It was the method of the Apostles, in all their great work of founding the Christian Church, to wait upon facts and events, to adjust their action to circumstances, to meet evils and needs as they arose. The Church was a growth, not an artificial system. The spirit of brotherhood which showed its extraordinary power on the Day of Pentecost deserves all M. Renan's admiration. What he says about the significance of the diaconate in the first ages has been sustained and developed by the remarkable investigations of which the first-fruits were recently given to the world from this pulpit in a course of Bampton Lectures. But Christian beneficence was not miraculously guarded in those days from the dangers and mischiefs of which the Church has had by this time such irresistible experience. What was given to some made others discontented ; persons began to throw the support of dependent members of their

families upon the public relief-chest; those who disliked work were tempted to be idle and to live on what was given rather than on what they might earn. We know of these evils from the efforts made by the Apostles to remedy them. But there is no ground for alleging that the Church, at Jerusalem or anywhere else, was ruined by them. They were the shadow which began at once, and has continued ever since, to accompany that work of Christian charity for which the Church has won its most characteristic fame. Those who study aright the Pentecostal communism are able to penetrate through the forms of it to the spirit, and can perceive that the same spirit may operate through other forms of life without changing its nature. So, when we have imbibed the spirit of our Lord's maxim, "Give to him that asketh thee," we are able in the same spirit to refuse to give to almost every one that asks; when he has taught us the meaning of his precept, "Swear not at all," we are able to take an oath loyally in a court of justice without being disloyal to Christ; when we understand what sort of mind he commends when he bids us turn the left cheek to him that has

smitten us on the right, we have no scruple in punishing an offender ; after listening to the exhortation, " Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," we can give our names to be published in a subscription-list. A temper is best known by an act which it immediately prompts ; but if the act be one which for any reason would be ill-advised, the temper is neither killed nor discredited by the act not being done, but retains all its authority, and may even win increased power. The law of Christian partnership is written, as in letters of light, in the triumphant unselfishness of the first days, and we could not have known it so well as through that example ; and having thus learnt it, we acknowledge it as remaining to this day the law by which Christian feeling should be universally governed, and to which Christian life should always be striving to render a wise obedience.

Many of the institutions of our English society have something of a communistic character, in that they levy contributions from the richer for the benefit of the poorer ; but there is one to which the term communistic has been especially applied, I mean

the system of public relief established under the Poor Law. I need not say that the epithet is not in general intended to be a favourable one. It so happens that communism, which has so much that is Christian in its associations, is apt to connote with us injustice and social anarchy. In what proportion this feeling about communism is due to the violence of professed communists, and in what to the prejudice of those who are interested in the undisturbed security of private rights, we need not stop to inquire. The title is one which without either praise or blame may be scientifically applied to our Poor Law. Through it the community taxes its more prosperous members for the relief of the poor, even of those whose poverty is entirely their own fault. The Christian feeling of the country takes creditable care that the arrangements of our Workhouses and Workhouse Schools should be thoroughly humane. The Frenchwoman who is identified with all that is most anarchical and revolutionary in French communism, has just confessed the surprise and pleasure with which she has seen the interior of a London Workhouse. The same Christian feeling,



when uninstructed by experience, desires that outdoor relief should be given freely; and there is enough uninstructed feeling to hinder the general restriction of outdoor relief to the narrowest possible limits. But experience tells us, with an assurance which scientific certainty cannot surpass, that easy public relief is a baneful gift to the poorer classes. The last Trades' Union Congress adopted, together with a resolution in favour of the nationalisation of the land, another in favour of liberal outdoor relief. The resolutions were passed without much discussion, and probably were the utterance of sympathy rather than reflection. Certainly those who desire to raise the working-class could do nothing more contrary to their aim than to promote the giving of public relief on easy terms. An enemy of the working-class, who had a malignant desire to degrade it, could not find a method for securing his end at the same time more insidious and more effective, than to make such relief more and more easy to obtain. It may be called one of the mysterious dispensations of Providence that a thing which seems so Christian and humane as to give to him that is in need

should be capable of doing so much harm. Mysterious or not, a dispensation of Providence it assuredly is ; and one of the ways in which a person of truly communistic sympathies and desires may best give effect to them is by adding to the strength of the instructed public opinion which would rigorously reduce poor law relief to a minimum.

The paradoxical character of what we see to be Christian duty in this matter of relief would suggest to us caution and inquiry and deference to the lessons of experience with regard to all schemes for reducing the inequalities which are so afflicting to the Christian consciousness in our modern social system. It is evident that the best methods of social regulation are not of the things revealed to babes. On the economical projects, having that Christian aim, which are exciting interest at the present time, such as the appropriation by the State of the rent of land, I have neither the right nor the intention to offer any opinion. I have indicated already that there are two lines along which those who are dissatisfied with the present tenure of land are now moving. There are those who would like to see peasant proprietors multi-

plied, and would therefore wish that land should be made as divisible and saleable as possible, and be put on the same footing with other property. And there are those who would go back to the old distinction between land and movable possessions, which it has been the tendency of recent civilisation to efface, and would put the land into the hands of the State. All that I have to suggest with regard to such problems is, that as Christians we should practise the method of recollection. Let us remind ourselves of what the ideal of a Christian Society should be ; let us take an occasional bath of pure Christian feeling by referring to the teaching of our Lord and of his Apostles, and to the actual infancy of the Christian Church ; and so let us dispose our minds to the patient—though it may well be also the distrustful—consideration of any schemes which promise to make the condition of the poor less unworthy of fellow-Christians and brothers. To suppose that legislation and organised methods of union and co-operation can do nothing to raise the level of the working-classes is scarcely less reasonable than to suppose that they can do everything.

And we ought not to be surprised if any measure from which much has been hoped should prove only partially successful. Nothing succeeds perfectly in human affairs; and we make our progress by means of the experiments which fail as well as by means of those which succeed. The less sanguine members of society owe much to the more enthusiastic and venturesome.

The fear which has been sometimes felt by economists, that any considerable increase of the burdens laid on property might weaken the instinct of accumulation and so tend to diminish the total wealth of the country, may safely, I should think, be dismissed from our minds. It would take a good deal of additional taxing of the rich to cause the increase of property to lose its attraction. There are strong reasons for deprecating capricious and uncertain transfers of property from one class to another. It is a serious loss to a State that confidence should be impaired, and that men should be diverted from reliance on old-fashioned industry and providence and what they can do for themselves. But the desire to be rich is not likely to lose its nerve. Property is sweet to the flesh. And Christian

teaching—though it is false to its models if it stimulates covetousness—is proved to have the general effect of causing wealth to increase. It has been found that the conscientiousness which Christianity fosters will tend to the making and preserving of property more surely than the most eager passion for accumulating. John Wesley, prescribing poverty to his Methodists with almost the severity of the founder of a monastic order, found, to his perplexity, that he could not prevent his followers from becoming rich. The Quakers, bound by similar repudiations of worldly aims and similar obligations to show practical charity, have been in the habit of growing rich like the Methodists. The Gospel forbids the love of money, and offers men deliverance from such care about saving as depresses life and makes it miserable ; but it bids us practise self-control and the good use of our time ; it deprecates ostentation and waste ; it warns us not to neglect or abandon to destitution those of our own household ; it encourages us to work and to save, in order that we may have to give to him that needs ; it commends to us the integrity that wins credit and the coolness which rejects rash specula-

tions : and he who acts according to such instructions, even if his mind were utterly purged from the desire to be rich, can hardly fail to add to his possessions. This will be the case of the majority ; but there should be many members of a Christian community, who, without neglecting domestic obligations, will occupy themselves with labour which does not bring them much of the bread that perishes, and set a much-needed example of the contempt of riches.

There can be little difficulty in recognising that the mind of stewardship which the Gospel commends would be far more potent for all social good than the mind of absolute ownership ; that the habit of asking, not "May I not do what I will with my own ?" but "Must I not do what God wills with that which he has lent me ?"—would be the motive of all that is at the same time liberal and judicious in the use of money. The godly—or in other words, the high-minded and serviceable—use of money is an art that does not come by nature. About this we have great need to pray that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power

faithfully to fulfil the same. I think that, as regards giving, the Universities may be said to be in advance of other sections of English society. The public spirit, the *sensus communis*, from which munificence naturally springs, finds some special nourishment in academic life. But a grudging and tenacious grasp of money sometimes shows itself to our surprise where we should hardly expect it. It is not every respectable Englishman who knows how to give, even in moderation, cheerfully. If public objects had the same reverence amongst us as they had in Athens and Rome, and as they have in the United States, there would be an embarrassment of riches for all purposes which money could serve. We who, from a knowledge of the temptations of the poor, anxiously deprecate careless almsgiving, never mean to excuse those whom our warnings may reach from giving more largely in better ways. If any practical discipline of life is desirable, the humble and self-distrustful Christian may well think it important to include in it some self-binding resolution as to giving. But it is not in giving only, it is also in what we distinguish as spending, that the mind of



stewardship is to be exercised. A considerable part of each man's life goes into his spending, and reveals its character in it, and too often wastes and consumes itself in it. In the case of Undergraduates, for example, it must be admitted to be a much more important question how they spend than how they give. It is pathetic enough to see how much injury a young man may inflict upon himself and his own career by foolish spending whilst he is at college ; but it is not only himself that he thus injures, he does a cruel wrong to parents and brothers and sisters, and he helps to demoralise the society around him. Self-interest might well restrain him ; but there are those with whom a sense of what is due to God and to friends and to the commonwealth and to weaker brethren would be a more powerful as well as a nobler motive than self-interest.

Your money is not yours,—so the voice of God in the Gospel declares to us, claiming the assent of every conscience of men,—to do harm with, as may please your lusts or your vanity. It is but entrusted to you, and the heavenly Lord will some day demand of you an account of your stewardship. If you wish

to make friends by means of what you have to lay out, do so, that is the most comprehensive object for which your money is put into your hands; but let the friends be such as will receive you into the eternal tabernacles of genuine friendship and regard. Let them not be such as will laugh at you and despise you, or have occasion for resentment against you; but so deal with those around you, whether in your own rank or below it, in all honesty and kindness, that they may at least respect you, and that if possible the respect may grow into lasting affection. So spend and give, that the links which you help to forge between members of the social chain may be sound and durable. Strive to the utmost of your power against corrupting and dissolving modes of life. And, that you may have the living root from which the true social feeling will naturally grow and flourish, first give your own selves to the Lord. For you yourselves are not your own. You belong to him who bought you with his blood; and he bought you, that you might no more be slaves of self or of the world, but in the perfect freedom of love might serve God and your brethren.

## X.

### MAURICE'S CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM.

(Read at a meeting of a Cambridge Society, 23d October 1884.)

SOME thirty years ago, many who knew nothing else about Maurice had heard of him as professing to be a Christian Socialist. It must have been under strong pressure that he, to whom all such designations were odious, and who shrank with a sensitive horror from being identified with any party, allowed himself to accept this name. But the strong pressure was upon him. There were maxims current in the world, and especially in that religious world against the tyranny of which he was in a chronic attitude of revolt, which seemed to him to call for a startling and defiant protest. It was being assumed and taught that the commercial principle was the law on which the Maker had built the universe ; that every man was

sent into the world to get what he could for himself, in competition or otherwise; that there was nothing more sacred than the rule of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest. The language and the ideas of trade had, in Maurice's view, infected and debased theology itself. In the very relations of men to God hardly anything could be seen but a sort of bargaining for personal advantage. The name of Socialism was well known, and it had to Maurice the attraction of being a bugbear to the commercial and the religious worlds. Of all the parties which had their several journalistic organs there was none which was not ready to denounce Socialism. But the name had a good witness in it. It asserted the principle of society, of association; and it had been expressly used to assert this principle against that of individualism or competition. Many theories and schemes with which Maurice had as little sympathy as any one else had been advocated by speculators who called themselves Socialists. But even these speculators had all seen something of the glory of the divine principle of association; they had experienced a noble revulsion from

the watchword, "Each man for himself." It was true that people might be ready to regard Socialism as implying community of wives, direct robbery of the rich, or at the least some absurd economical assumption; but if "Christian" were prefixed to "Socialism" they might be compelled to ask what it properly meant, and to see the principle of society, of mutual help, of fellow-work, plainly contrasted with the principle of isolation and self-seeking. So Maurice was content that the business experiments in which he was induced to take part should be announced and promoted under the name of Christian Socialism, and he nerved himself to the task of maintaining and illustrating the cause which those experiments represented.

The principle of this original Christian Socialism was revolutionary enough to awaken a passionate ardour in its supporters and to create apprehensions in those whose ideas of life were attacked by it; but the forms in which it then sought to clothe itself were such as do not now alarm the most conservative. They were co-operative associations of working-men. These were absolutely voluntary. It was soon found that co-operative

associations, to be successful, demanded qualities in their members, and favourable external conditions, which were rarely forthcoming. The associations founded by the Christian Socialists, instead of setting English society in a flame, for the most part had a brief struggling existence and then died out. The co-operative movement, as a whole, has not died out, but has spread far and wide, and embraces at this time a considerable number of associations scattered over the land, and is still supported with much enthusiasm and hope. But the name of Socialism has not stuck to this movement. It is used now to denote theories and schemes which have in view action of one kind or another on the part of the political community for bettering the condition of the poor. The Socialism of to-day regards the rich as having managed to obtain more than their fair share of the advantages of life. It pronounces that wealth is created by labour, and that, therefore, it ought to be enjoyed by the labourers. It demands that the State, representing the many, should take in hand the righting of their condition. Some Socialists are for having this done with more violence,

some with less. To some the landowners only are robbers; others think that those also who have money in the funds, others again that all capitalists alike, ought to be made at once to disgorge their ill-gotten property. Many Socialists would be more considerate towards individuals, and would plan that redistribution should be so arranged as to inflict the least possible hardship on present possessors, whilst securing their rights to the working-classes in the future. The Socialists are, for the most part, persons alienated from Christianity, and many of them regard it with a bitter hatred as being identified in history with the privileges of the rich. But there is a small band of Christians, including a few generous-minded clergymen, who have thrown themselves with ardour into the Socialistic cause, and maintain that nowhere is so much sympathy with the poor, nowhere so much antipathy to the rich, to be found expressed as in the New Testament. They affirm that a single-minded Christian ought, almost evidently, to be an impatient Socialist.

To those in whom a new interest in Maurice's teaching has been excited, or an



old interest refreshed, by the recently published biography, it naturally occurs to ask how Maurice would have regarded this State Socialism. That it is quite a different thing from the Christian Socialism of which he was the prophet must be at once admitted. The ardent Socialist of to-day looks upon the co-operative movement as little better than a pale imposture. But no one who knows anything of Maurice can think of him as a man who would have shrunk through timid conservatism from carrying out Christian principles to their furthest point of development in life. And the questions raised by State Socialism, and the facts to which it calls attention, would unquestionably have stirred his mind to its depths. It may be seen from the biography that the social agitation of 1848 and the following years drew him out as nothing else did. But the convictions which it drew out were those of his whole life, and belonged to the substance of his faith.

It cannot have escaped any student of Maurice's life that external things derived their meaning and worth to him from their connection with principles. Apart from

principles and spirit, outward things were as inconsiderable as a shadow separated from that which casts it; whilst the inner meaning expressed by them might give to outward things any degree of sacredness and importance. And his was not the mind which could conceive of principles or ideas or laws as existing otherwise than in God. There was divine purpose, divine speech, in all the working of things: what man had to do was to listen always to the speech, to strive according to the energy. The one way in which a man might most effectually help his brother-men was by bearing witness to the will of God and so leading them to hear for themselves his voice and to submit to his operation. The value of the co-operative movement in Maurice's eyes was that it asserted in a living and practical manner—for the witness of mere propositions or sayings was nothing without the witness of life—the principle of mutual help as the Creator's law for human life. Except as it did this it had little interest for him; if it ceased through any cause to do this he did not care to be identified with it. He caught at it, if I may say so, as putting to the England

of the day the point-blank question, "Is human life, as it now is and has been in the past, founded by the Maker's design upon the selfish and competitive instincts or upon the law of mutual help and fellow-work?" He would not endure that the question should be put in this form—"Ought not human life *to be* founded on the principle of mutual help?" The distinction between the two forms was a vital one. The notion that wise and good men were to set to work to make an improved society out of their own ideas was one which he repudiated and denounced with all his energy, and he did not care what bewilderment the repudiation might cause. His conviction that God had been working in the past was only equalled by his conviction that God was working in the present. He did not need to be reminded that there was an infinite quantity of self-seeking in the world: no one was ever less open than he to the criticism that he shut his eyes to disagreeable facts and made a world for himself out of his dreams. But what he wanted to be brought to the test of inquiry, the more searching the better, was whether human social life had or had

not for its secret, its law, its basis, the union of members with fellow-members in one body; whether all that was good, pleasing, permanent, fruitful, real, in human social life, grew out of that principle or out of the strife of warring elements. What did the very name of "society" mean?

Maurice teaches that in studying what society is we discover certain fixed institutes in it. The family relation is the simplest of these. We cannot conceive of society as existing in any condition which we should acknowledge as worthy, or which we could call by this name of society, except through families. The earliest and the latest experiences alike bear their witness to the family. Its meanest ties are necessary, its noblest life is full of the glory of humanity. If the family be thus recognised, how much will follow! We go on as a matter of course, and by easy steps, from the primary to larger unions. We see the Eternal Maker adjusting human families together in tribes, in nations, in a sacred mankind. We see how these divinely created relations define obligations and give authority to them. Our morality consists in paying reverent homage

to the relations by which we find ourselves to be bound, in reaching forward to the highest realisation of them which we are enabled to imagine, and in striving to conform with affections and dispositions to their ideals.

I am not sure that Maurice, in anything that he has written, does full justice to the instinct of self-preservation or self-assertion which we perceive to be so active in the history of the Creation, including that of the human race. If he omits to do so, it is certainly not because he overlooked the activity of this instinct, nor, I believe, because he would have shrunk from recognising it. But he saw that the instinct was more than able to take care of itself. The philosophies and the religions of the time were all glorifying it. Maurice's call was to assail it on the throne to which it was exalted. It would not do its work the less effectively—whatever the work was which it had to do—because Maurice and all whom he could influence were maintaining the claims of another power, and treating the usurpations of the competitive instinct with contumely and defiance. It may, perhaps,

be useful that persons whose mission and spirit are less exceptional should make more formal and definite allowance than Maurice did for the necessary action of this instinct. The Maker, it is undeniable, has implanted it in human nature, and given it an immense labour to perform. The office of the higher constitutive and combining principle is not to kill the instinct, but to reduce it to subjection, to restrain and regulate it. The co-operative associations which blazoned on their banner the principle of mutual help and fellow-work did not even aim at abolishing competition any more than other companies do. Each association competed with other firms for custom, and sought to draw to itself customers who would otherwise have dealt with other shops. It had to fix the payments of workers, not by a scale which the promoters might have thought desirable, but by that which the haggling of the market made possible. Though Maurice was not an economist but a preacher of righteousness and of the Gospel, he did not shew himself fanatically blind to economical facts; and those who sympathise with his defiant and thoroughgoing assertion of the principle of

membership will not find themselves troubled, I believe, by any untenable positions taken up by him, when they desire to make full allowance for the office of the self-assertive instinct in the universal development of the creation. How reasonable he could be in discussing the co-operative movement with a fair critic, may be seen in a letter to Mrs. Rich, p. 46 of the second volume of the *Life*. What embarrasses us all alike is the existence or nature of evil in the world. We none of us know how to deal satisfactorily with the problems which it creates. If there was anything characteristic of Maurice with regard to these difficulties, it was not that he had any solution of them to offer, but that he was accustomed to blend the intellectual confusion caused by evil with the moral confusion introduced by it into human life, and held that the only way into light of all kinds was through uncompromising repudiation of it. He would not have allowed that anything which God had made was essentially evil; it would have been a matter of faith with him to see in all the strivings of nature impulses which could be purged of moral evil, and which could be frankly and piously



recognised as issuing from the one Fountain of Life.

What was paradoxical in Maurice's teaching—and it must be admitted that there is much in it which has this air—is due chiefly to his habit of seeing God in all things and all things in God. I cannot think there has been any one since the first age of Christendom, however full of faith, in whom this kind of sight has been quite so habitual as it was in Maurice. It made him assume in everything he said that all knowledge consists in perceiving how God has been working and still works, and all duty and true effort in letting God work through our conscious wills. This is the key to the distinction on which he was for ever insisting between systems and order; this was the assumption which moulded all his sociology. He cared for nothing but ideas; he cared for nothing but facts. It would be commonly taken for granted that there are two classes of minds, opposed to each other,—those which care for ideas, and those which care for facts. But Maurice looked for ideas in facts, and was sure that they were to be found there. And the ideas could be nothing else but the divine

thoughts, issuing from a living and active divine will.

To revert, for an illustration of this method of his, to Christian Socialism. It came very easy to those who were working with him to talk of arranging the relations of social life upon a new basis. This language, as I have said, Maurice could not tolerate. His faith was that society was rightly constituted already; that men had been made fellow-members with the Son of man, who was the Son of God. He could only work in the way of bearing witness to this actual constitution, and of fighting against all systems and institutions and practices which seem to be contradicting and neutralising it. Acts and utterances which sprang from this method of his were often, excusably enough, perplexing and even worrying to his colleagues. I know of nothing which throws more light upon Maurice's sociological method—if the phrase is to be used—than a letter to be found on p. 42 of the second volume of the *Life*. It is one of those addressed to Mr. Ludlow. We can still feel the heat of the emotion which inspired it. The subject of it is a proposal advocated by Mr. Sully, one of the Christian

Socialists, that a controlling "Central Board" should be formed to bind together the co-operative associations and to secure unity of action amongst them — apparently a most innocent and practical proposal. But Maurice had a conversation with Mr. Sully on the subject, and became painfully conscious of a divergence between his own views and Mr. Sully's. He immediately wrote to Mr. Ludlow, prophesying against this Central Board as a work of the Evil One. I quote some passages from the letter :—

Sully said plainly that the associations were actuated by a thoroughly mercenary, selfish, competitive spirit ; that they aimed merely at a more successful rivalry than is possible on the present system ; that consequently they would, of course, produce results much worse than those which the present individual competition was producing, unless they were directed by a central board, which would organise them efficiently and scientifically, or at least set before them an efficient and scientific mode of organising themselves. . . . If I join his central board, he teaches me to say, "My purpose is to turn a number of warring forces, each seeking the other's destruction, into harmony, by certain scientific arrangements of mine concerning production and consumption." Now what I have said, and so long as I have breath in my body hope to say, is this, "I acknowledge in these warring creatures an element of peace and harmony, the work of God's spirit. To that I speak in each of them.

I can speak to nothing else. If the Son of Peace be there my peace will rest upon them ; if not, it will return to me again. I have no hope of entering into terms of peace with the devil. I have no notion that I can make him my servant by a mere ingenious and extensive combination. I believe, the more skilful and large the combination of such elements, the worse and the more deadly will be the result." Talk as much as you like about putting the hand to the plough and drawing back ; I never did put my hand to *this* plough. I have put my hand to another, from which I should draw back at once and for ever if I tolerated by any word or act the maxim which Sully distinctly avows, and upon which he rests the necessity of a central board. Talk as much as you like about my systemphobia. It is this which I mean by system, it is this which I have hated in the Church, the State, the family, the heart, and which I see coming out more fearfully every day—the organisation of evil powers for the sake of producing good effects. . . . God's order seems to me more than ever the antagonist of man's systems ; Christian Socialism is in my mind the assertion of God's order. Every attempt, however feeble, to bring it forth I honour and desire to assist. Every attempt to hide it under a great machinery, call it organisation of labour, central board, or what you like, I must protest against as hindering the gradual development of what I regard as a divine purpose, as an attempt to create a new constitution of society, when what we want is that the old constitution should exhibit its true functions and energies. . . . In the name of the true King, and in assertion of his rights, I will with God's help continue to declare in your ears, and in the ears of the half-dozen who are awake on Sunday afternoons, that no Privy Councils, National Councils, or Œcume-

nical Councils ever did lay or ever can lay a foundation for men's souls and God's Church to rest upon. That is what I said in my sermon. I did affirm distinctly that Christ had used councils and might use them when and how he pleased, as he may, for aught I know, construct central boards for the management of trade fraternities. But I do say that neither the council nor the central board can make the fraternity, or establish the law or principle of it, and that if we build churches upon the decrees of councils, or associations upon decrees of central boards, we build upon the sand, and that when the rain comes our houses will fall, and that great will be the fall of them.

How State Socialism, as generally advocated, would be regarded by Maurice might be inferred with some confidence from the feelings expressed in this letter. But there is another principle of his social teaching which bears upon the same subject—the distinction he was accustomed to make between the Church and the State. The distinction, it hardly needs to be said, was what might be called an ideal one. It may be found stated and illustrated in a series of eight letters which he contributed to the *Daily News* in September 1868, and of which a brief account is given in the *Life*. "What I mean," he says, "by the union of Church and State is the co-operation of spirit

with law ; the abandonment of the attempt to put one for the other, or to dispense with either." The State is "a sacred and divine institution bearing a witness for law and justice which the Church under no condition has borne or can bear." The Church is a "human and divine polity" to which man as man belongs, and which concerns the relation of his spirit to a universal and uniting spirit. I quote a few words from the author of the biography :—

Each—the State and the Church—he believes to be necessary to the right action of the other. . . . He maintains that while the State, as the asserter of the law, ought always to be by its very nature conservative of property, careful of individual rights ; the Church, on the other hand, is bound to be by its nature communistic, bound to say to every man, "What you have is not your own. You are only trusted with it that you may do with it what it is right that you should do."

State Socialism of the prevalent type would have been distasteful to Maurice, not only as undertaking to put things right by a vast machinery and a new constitution of society, but also as tending to confuse the provinces of the State and the Church—that is, of the law and spirit.

On the other hand, no one, no one

certainly with such strong and rooted convictions, ever showed more pliability than Maurice with regard to practical politics and social arrangements. The pliability was not the triumph of practical necessity, in a common-sense mind, over speculative convictions; it was the expression of his most sacred belief. He was always listening for the whispers of divine suggestion in the events and movements around him. He saw plainly in history that institutions and arrangements in which some true idea was embodied might cease to be any longer the authentic exponents of the idea, and were then liable to be superseded. He was sensitively aware that God often had unexpected and unlikely ways of asserting his purposes. It may be in accordance with God's over-ruling purpose that the State at some moment should do what a correct theory would assign to the Church and the Church what might be assigned to the State. It was a vehement contention of Maurice's earlier years of Churchmanship that education should be the work not of the State, but of the Church. Education should be regarded as belonging not to the sphere of



the law, but to the sphere of spirit. But to suppose that these convictions would have made him an irreconcilable opponent of Mr. Forster's Education Act and of board schools would be to misunderstand the nature of his faith. He was always open to practical arguments drawn from expediency. It would have been quite possible to win him over to that poor Central Board, as the later allusion to it in his letter plainly shows, if it could have been made clear to him that it was a convenient institution, not identified with any mischievous maxim.

Whilst he remained to the last a scorner of Liberalism as a dogma or a platform, and would acknowledge no allegiance to it, his practical politics came to be, as a matter of fact, very much those of a moderate Liberal. No mere prejudice was allowed by him to dictate his action. I should have expected him to have a strong feeling against woman suffrage. He insisted as devoutly as any one on that Christian relation of woman to man, of wife to husband, which is invoked by those to whom woman suffrage is odious. But Maurice's interest in the education and the general well-being of women led him to look

with open eyes at the question of their being enfranchised as voters, and he came to the conclusion that the feminine ideal need not be degraded, and that many beneficial results might be won, by this enfranchisement of women. On the delicate question of the legislative attempts to check some of the evil effects of prostitution Maurice found it extremely difficult to form a settled opinion. The arguments of medical men whom he respected had great weight with him, and, on the other hand, he was much moved by the impassioned appeals of Mrs. Butler and those who denounced the Acts. He was thus swayed from one side to the other ; and when, as a member of the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the subject, he took his final place amongst the opponents of the Acts, the anxiety which the decision cost him proved a severe strain upon his health.

Strongly, therefore, as he would have been repelled by the assumptions of the ordinary State Socialist, he would never have set himself on principle against any reasonable and hopeful project of State action for the benefit of the poorer classes. No one,

indeed, who deliberately consents to the Poor Law can consistently take that position. Maurice would have been warmly interested in any proposal which promised to be for the advantage of the poor, and he would have been the more likely to support it if it were opposed by what seemed to him to be the selfish fears of the rich. But his predispositions would have been in favour of voluntary action, implying and calling out mutual regard and consideration and the turning of hearts to hearts. And he would have hoped for no good results from compulsory redistributions, seeking to bring about by mechanical arrangements what the Maker intends to be the fruits of the awakened and enlightened spirit.

## XI.

### THE ECONOMIC PRECEPTS OF CHRIST.

(Preached at Christ Church, St. Marylebone, 9th September, 1877.)

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

MATTHEW vi. 33.

THERE is a great danger of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount being regarded as visionary and unpractical. Amongst those who find themselves able to criticise the writings of the New Testament as freely as they would the pages of any other ancient book, it is a common habit to profess a great admiration for the unworldly morality of this discourse, which is often set in a place of honour above the rest of the volume, but at the same time to take for granted that its precepts belong to an imaginary world or an exceptional society, and cannot be put in practice by ordinary men in the world as it

is. And it must be admitted that many who shrink from criticism of this kind are conscious of a similar impression left upon their minds by some parts of the Sermon on the Mount. "Resist not evil;" "Give to him that asketh thee;" "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth;"—as we read or hear these precepts, we cannot help feeling that they have a certain beauty, but we find it difficult to accept them as universal laws. We may recognise them as what Roman Catholics call "counsels of perfection,"—that is, rules by the observance of which saints who withdraw themselves from the world may cultivate a perfection denied to ordinary mortals, but we hardly aim at digesting them into our own lives. If we saw it related in a life of some holy man that he was accustomed to put these rules in practice, we might willingly consent to think of him as belonging to a higher class than ourselves, and yet not be convinced that we ought to go and do likewise.

Even if we are in such an attitude of mind towards them, these precepts do us, I believe, some good. To recognise them as high and beautiful may in some important

degree touch and mould our dispositions. Our sympathies will always tell upon our conduct; and who can be hard or gross enough to read without emotion these commands which imply such unlimited trust in man and in God—these references to the fowls of the air, which sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet are fed by the heavenly Father; and to the lilies of the field, which toil not nor spin, yet are clothed with raiment surpassing the finest of Solomon's? The natural impulse to retaliate, the earthly eagerness to lay up treasure, must often have been put to shame and relaxed by the very sound of these heavenly words.

But we fail to make the intended use of these precepts of our Lord's if we do not receive them as authoritative. There was nothing, you may be sure, in the Lord Jesus of the dreaming enthusiast, forgetful of the actual conditions of life. Remember what is recorded at the end of this Sermon on the Mount: "It came to pass, when Jesus ended these sayings, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes."

The teaching of Jesus seemed to the people that of one who spoke with authority—this was what made it so different to them from the pedantry with which they were familiar. Their feeling was not only that he thoroughly meant what he said, but that their consciences responded with submission to his commands.

And yet it is inevitable, perhaps, that in the cold mood—very unlike that of the first audience of the Lord Jesus—in which we come to these precepts, we should ask, Is it then a command of universal authority that every one who is struck on the right cheek should turn the left also to the smiter; that human beings should make no more provision for the future than is made by the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field? No: this, we rightly feel, is impossible. But this is what Christ says? Yes, this or nearly this is the letter of Christ's precept. We are compelled therefore to admit that the letter of what Christ here enjoins is at least not of universal obligation. The laws of life and progress put this irresistible compulsion upon us. The Quaker, who holds to non-resistance in the letter, and who will not take an oath because Jesus said, "Swear not at all," not



only puts himself outside of the real movement of human life, but condemns himself for disobeying, as he conspicuously does, the equally imperative precept, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." It is clear that if we are to accept the authority of what Christ says, that authority must not be identified with the letter of the precept. We must penetrate through the letter to the spirit, to the principle of which the letter is the expression.

This is the secret of the teaching of Christ. The key is given us in the New Testament itself. The spirit, we are told, is everything in what Christ teaches. To go by the letter is to be brought into bondage, even if the letter be spoken by the voice of the Son of God. The use of the letter is to bring us into communication with the spirit; when it has done that, it has served its purpose.

To whom was Jesus speaking? This is a question of some interest. The supposed unpractical character of the precepts of this discourse has been sometimes explained by the suggestion that they were addressed only to the small company of the followers of Jesus, whom he was calling to a quite

exceptional life, and for whom, therefore, habits would be suitable which could not properly be imitated by men in general. That might have been so. Christ has himself taught us that all men are not always to act in the same way. John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking; the Son of man came eating and drinking; fools might see in this difference an opposition between one school and another, but wisdom is justified of her children. But it seems certain that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is addressing a larger audience than that of the few who were to leave all and follow him. The words I have quoted are enough to show the Evangelist's view of the matter. The multitudes were struck by the authority with which he spoke. He was addressing, no doubt, his disciples. "His disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them." But by his disciples we are to understand all who were willing to accept him as their Master and to learn from him. The teaching, even if it had been spoken in the ears of a few only, has manifestly a general character.

But what was implied, at that time and in

that place, in being a disciple of Jesus? Supposing that there were hundreds or thousands willing to receive instruction from him, what did he desire to make of them? Did he wish them, for example, to leave their ordinary occupations? There is no evidence that he did. He was unlike other leaders who rose up in those years and drew people after them. They sought to form armies, by the strength of which they might achieve deliverance for Israel. But Jesus steadily refused to allow himself to be put at the head of a multitude. He repelled from him those who would have gathered round him as a leader; he separated himself from them; he was to be something quite different from the leader of an insurrection. And yet there was some excuse for those who would have made him, against his own will, a king. For he was always speaking about a kingdom. The kingdom of Heaven, or of God, was ever in his mouth. And he roused the spirit of expectation in men's minds by announcing to them that the kingdom was coming, was near, and bidding them prepare for it. This establishes a marked difference between Jesus Christ and a professed moralist or religious

teacher. The moral and religious teaching of Jesus had reference to, and depended upon, his announcement of the Heavenly kingdom. This is plain upon every page of the Gospels. To instruct men as his disciples was, in the mind of Jesus, to prepare them for the kingdom of God.

But when we have said this, we have used words which then were words of mystery, and which even now we find it difficult to explain. Not that Jesus intentionally clothed himself in mystery. He came as a light, not as a figure of darkness, into the world. A large portion of the recorded words of Jesus are devoted to the object of helping his hearers to understand the kingdom of Heaven. If he had explained it by a formal definition, and had been careful to speak of it always in the terms of such a definition, he would have conveyed to many minds an agreeable impression that they understood it. But he does not take this course ; he adopts a very different method. He does not define the kingdom—he illustrates it. He uses a great number of illustrations, so incompatible with each other that they might be thought likely to confuse men's notions of what they aimed

at making known. A marriage-feast, the buying of a pearl, a master and his servants, the sowing and growth of grain in a field—these are a few of the images which Jesus presented to the minds of the people, that they might be the better able to know what he was talking about when he named the kingdom. And the phrases in which he named it were very various, and, in the letter, inconsistent with each other. It was approaching; it was present. Men were in it; it was in them. Men were children of the kingdom, and they might be cast out of it. They were exhorted to receive it, and to enter into it. They were bidden also to seek it, and to pray that it might come.

We infer from this mode of presenting the kingdom of Heaven that the invisible and spiritual reality denoted by this name could not be adequately made known by one earthly image, but that men might gain glimpses and apprehensions of it through many images, which were none the less useful because they were incongruous with each other.

The phrase I am now asking you to consider is, "*Seek ye the kingdom of God.*"

Our Lord was contrasting one class of

aims, one kind of service, with another. "Lay not up treasures on earth : but lay up treasures in heaven. Do not attempt to serve both God and mammon; if you love mammon, you will have no love for God ; if you hold to God, you will despise mammon. Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek). But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

There are things which men, by their natural impulses, desire on earth—the things which gratify the senses, the means which enable them to exalt themselves and which give them power. They who would be disciples of Jesus Christ must not give their minds to these, must not set their affections on them. They must seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

The Kingdom of God. These words should bring before our minds God ruling in the unseen world, and ruling over hearts and minds drawn into the true fellowship with him. Such rule will inevitably manifest itself in the visible world, if it were only because men live and act as creatures of flesh and

blood; it may manifest itself in many and various ways—in gradual influence, or in sudden and revolutionary occurrences. But it is the characteristic of this rule to be primarily and essentially spiritual. God is a spirit, and he deals with men as spiritual beings, having spiritual capacities and possessions and inheritances, having also spiritual dangers and enemies.

To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness will therefore be—to be anxious that the seeker and other men should live in the true spiritual relations to their Heavenly Father. The disciples of Christ are bidden to believe in this unseen order, and to set their hearts upon it. They who obey the precept will be looking to God as a true Father, who attracts, receives, blesses, guides, and sustains his human children; the vision of themselves and other men which they will have before their eyes will be that of persons thankfully rejoicing in God's pardon and favour, finding their satisfaction in the knowledge of him, and endeavouring more and more to conform their inward lives to his active will. These are the general ideas of the kingdom of God, applicable to all ages



and circumstances. In our Lord's time this abiding kingdom had peculiar manifestations. It revealed itself in him personally; it was about to produce shocks and changes in the external history of the world. But when our Lord says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," we are not concerned so much with the peculiar signs and manifestations of the kingdom in that age as with its eternal spiritual characteristics.

To all the Galileans who heard him, and not only to those whom he summoned to leave all and follow him; to the people of every age, and not to those only on whom the ends of a dispensation were coming, Christ thus presented heavenly interests, instead of earthly, as their true and proper aims. Men made in the image of God, and addressed by the Son of God as his brethren, ought not to be anxious and eager about food and drink and dress, about the money which purchases earthly gratifications and earthly power; but about the knowledge of God, about the doing of his will; about the ties and common interests which bind men to God and to each other as the inhabitants of a heavenly world. In exact harmony

with his Master's teaching, St. Paul said to believers in the risen Christ, "Seek the things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things on the earth. Put on kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, and love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." This is to say, in other words, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Imagine the two classes of interests set in express competition with each other. On the one hand see the good things of earth, all that can gratify the natural desires, all that can minister to mortal vanity and pride—wealth, rank, power. You know with what tremendous attractive force these things appeal to our human nature. On the other hand, see the things that are invisible—the knowledge of Christ and of God, the eternal grace making itself felt in the human soul, the thankfulness stirred by undeserved goodness, the repose and joy that come from faith, the bonds of duty, the blessedness of the Divine order in which each lives for God and his brethren, the practical virtue and

happiness which spring from conformity to that order. The soul of one who is listening to Christ sees something of these good things, though the earthly are the more obtrusive. Christ points to the two classes thus competing with each other for man's affections, and says imperatively to his disciples, "Seek not those ; seek ye these."

Yes, brethren, imperatively, and at first without qualification. There can be no question, in the school of Christ, what our aims should be. With whatever consequences, at whatever cost,—the Christian is called upon to set his affections on the things above. This is what Christ's decisive language in the Sermon on the Mount is intended to convey to our minds. He means that we should say, without reserve, "Perish whatever stands in the way of our devotion to spiritual interests, to duty, love, self-sacrifice, to the will of God and the true welfare of our brethren. Let earthly industry, earthly accumulation, take its chance after these. The claim of Heaven is absolute, the claim of earth is relative and subordinate."

What sort of doctrine is this? Is it extreme, visionary, impracticable? What-

ever it may seem to you, do not allow yourselves to doubt that it is the teaching of our Lord and Master, and that he addresses it in all its stringency to every one of us. It is no matter that we have our wants, our businesses, our tastes, our fears, our burdens. None of these things must interfere with the imperious claims of the spiritual divine order upon the human soul. It is the very idea of a Christian that he acknowledges this order, and consents to be taken into it.

This is the really important part of Christ's teaching, because it has to deal with the rooted tendencies in our flesh, which are so hard to get under ; because we all have such strenuous desires to be rich, to be pleased, to be comfortable, to be safe, to be in a good position. But we need not leave out of our consideration those other words of Christ, "If ye seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these other things shall be added unto you." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." I said that we must let earthly industry take its chance *after* the things above. But we may safely do so. The industry which produces and earns is in no

danger of being destroyed by the predominance of heavenly interests, rightly understood. A second place is quite good enough for the prudence, the providence, that puts by earthly treasure, that stores up the grain in barns, and invests capital in industrial enterprises. But it holds that place securely when the spiritual divine order has the first place. I know that men may be tempted into idleness by the notion that they are caring for spiritual interests. Some of the Christians who had been taught by St. Paul were not proof against this temptation. He was obliged to warn those who were idly waiting for the appearing of the kingdom, that steady industry was an ordinance of God, that if a man wanted to eat he must work, that to neglect to provide for a man's household was to be worse than an infidel. In all ages there have been Christians who have failed to see the sacredness and heavenly authority of the laws which form families, societies, and nations, and have fancied that God was to be served by a renunciation of social and domestic ties. But Christ's teaching is not to be credited with errors like these. The impulses of duty and love which he would

foster are the best correctives of the idle and careless instincts. You cannot suppose that a spiritual temper would make a man lazy and self-indulgent, or thoughtless as to the welfare of his parents or his children. No ; whatever paradox there may be in the statement, the voice which insists with authority, " Lay not up treasures on earth : but treasures in heaven," is that which best promotes industrious and provident habits in a community.

Those who care for the real well-being of any community are obliged to contend earnestly against improvidence, and to do their best to encourage people to lay by. But they see plainly enough that what they are thus led to contend against are the fleshly instincts, and by no means the heavenly aims of God's children. A man is improvident because he likes taking his ease better than working, the indulgence of his appetites better than self-denial. The most effectual way of checking improvidence is to awaken the sense of duty, the care for higher things, the feelings and habits of one who thinks of human beings as the redeemed of Christ and God's children. Providence, I say again,

may take its chance, can be trusted to take care of itself, in a society of which the members are bent on realising the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

On every account, then, dear brethren, and with no misgivings, listen reverently to these precepts of Christ as laying down the law of your Christian life. Do not embarrass yourselves with the syllables of the letter. Suffer Christ to speak paradoxically, if he will. Be sure that he knew what sort of address men's consciences wanted. And *you* know, because every one knows, what sharp and plain speaking our consciences require in the matter of earthly possessions. You know how we let our energies be eaten up by covetous desires, or by anxious unsleeping fears about these things. What a blessed thing it would be for each of us, and how good for our society, if we could rise more habitually into the atmosphere to which Christ calls us, if we could give ourselves to God and his kingdom, and trust to him to add whatever of earthly good he sees to be desirable for us! Some might be less rich, might get on in the world less rapidly, might even incur heavy losses and misfortunes, but



how happy would they be in having more of the true riches! And the community will assuredly be the more prosperous in all that belongs to secure and diffused well-being, for the prevalence of the mind that sets duty above inclination, service above pleasure.

## XII.

### ALMSGIVING.

(Preached at St. Mark's, Hamilton Terrace, during the London Mission of February 1885.)

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”—MATTHEW v. 42.

THESE are words of the Lord Jesus Christ, taken from the collection of his precepts called the Sermon on the Mount. We who are met together in his name confess him to be our Master ; our fellow-Christian St. Paul called himself the “slave” of Jesus Christ. Others, who do not rejoice to be thus under law to Christ, are accustomed to praise without limit the Sermon on the Mount ; they regard the beautiful morality of these chapters as specially characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth ; and, so far as this morality is concerned, they are willing to reckon themselves amongst his disciples. “Give to him that asketh thee,

and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." The words are plain and peremptory, and cannot be disregarded by any disciple of Jesus Christ. They express a part of the law which is honoured by nearly the whole civilised world, and by which we Christians are absolutely bound.

Yes : but do we not hear or read the words with some misgivings ? People will talk sometimes—mistakenly, I think—of the Sermon on the Mount as setting forth a transcendental morality, what they call "Counsels of perfection," too high for the ordinary man to follow. They say that the common Christian must leave such a life to saints, and be content to qualify the teaching of Christ with worldly wisdom. My brethren, it is treason to Christ, and treason to our fellow-men also, to question the authority of the highest of Christ's principles over the commonest of human beings. If there is any precept of the Sermon on the Mount which is good for a saint, it is binding on every sinner who is brought to the knowledge of it. But these precepts, "Give to him that asketh thee," "Resist not evil," do not, or do not only, excite our misgivings because we know that

we could not fulfil them to the utmost, but because we are not sure that it would be right to try to do so. We have doubts whether we ought to give away as much as we can persuade ourselves to part with to those who ask ; whether we should be justified in submitting to wrongs without defending ourselves.

The doubts, I am confident, are wise and Christian doubts. I am to speak to you to-night on the subject of almsgiving. God forbid that I should tone down the rigour of any commandment of Christ ; but I must begin by declaring my conviction that the literal fulfilment of the precept "Give to him that asketh thee," instead of being worthy of a saint, would be in a high degree unchristian, and it is not difficult to see why it would be so. I have called it treason to lower the standard of the Christian ideal to the level of human weakness. But to fulfil a command of Christ in the letter is not to fulfil it perfectly. If there is one quality more characteristic than another of Christ's teaching, it is that it is spiritual. It has to do with the inward part of man, with motives, affections, resolutions. "The words that I

“speak unto you,” said Jesus, “are spirit, and are life.” It is a thing impossible to obey Christ in the letter, with the outward man. It may be answered, perhaps, “True, we know that unless the heart goes with the act, we are not really obeying Christ: we know that if we give away all our goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits us nothing. But we take for granted that whatever Christ told us to do, it is safe and right to do in the letter; that he would not have run the risk of being misunderstood, by bidding us do a thing which it might be sometimes not right to do.” No, my brethren, we must not take that for granted. Christ was not at all unwilling to speak so that those who looked to the surface only might be in danger of misunderstanding him. Not at all unwilling; on the contrary, it was his habit so to speak. The teaching of Christ is often what we may call paradoxical. We are compelled to see that he does not mean what, superficially, he would appear to mean. He said once, “If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my

disciple." Do you suppose, does any one suppose, that Christ made it a law for his disciples that they should hate their parents and their children? That, you see, is impossible. Yet unintelligent persons might speak of this as a plain precept of Christ. A want of intelligence, a want of spiritual insight, in his disciples, made Jesus impatient whilst he was on the earth, and makes him—may we not reverently say?—impatient now. When he said to the twelve, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," they thought he meant that they were to beware of poison that the Pharisees might put into bread. But Jesus broke out upon them with reproaches, in which we cannot fail to discern the tones of angry impatience. "Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? And they

say unto him, Seven. And he said unto them, Do ye not yet understand?"

What was the kind of understanding that Jesus desired to see in his disciples? He would have been inconsistent with himself if he had demanded worldly acumen. He thanked his Father that it had pleased him to hide the things of the kingdom of heaven from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them to babes. But he wished his disciples to look at everything that he said, from the spiritual point of view, and to listen for the spiritual meaning contained within the letter. That disciples of his should suppose themselves to be bound by the letter of any precept of his would have been peculiarly displeasing to him. I have heard this sort of thing said with regard to almsgiving or relief,—you, my brethren, may have heard it, or it may have passed through your own minds,—“I must not refuse to give relief to a poor, thinly-clad, apparently hungry creature, however I may be warned; the consequences I may leave to God.” Sometimes it will be said, “In spite of your political economy, I will obey Christ, and feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.” “Political economy”



seems a needlessly fine name to give to a regard for consequences. To pretend that disciples of Christ are bound, or privileged, to disregard the consequences of what they do, is an error almost too absurd to argue against. Now, experience may be heard almost shouting in our ears—not theory, but experience and visible fact—that to give alms without regard to consequences is to do mischief. Many of you know the name of William Law, the author of the *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. He was one of the best clergymen our Church has produced, and he was bent on leading a life of Christian obedience in the most thorough and unshrinking manner. He and two rich friends agreed to live together, and to spend as little as possible on themselves, and to give away almost all their joint income. They did so by relieving all who applied to them and who represented themselves as in want. The result was that they attracted crowds of idle and lying mendicants. For a long time Law shut his eyes to the evil of which he and his friends were thus the occasion ; until at last his fellow - parishioners were driven to present a memorial to the magistrates,

entreating them in some way to prevent Mr. Law from thus demoralising their parish. A sad and pathetic incident, illustrating the perplexities and contradictions of human life ! The best men are not above the need of learning wisdom from experience. The real Christian duty of these good people was not to be less self-denying and liberal, not necessarily to spend more of their income upon themselves, but to consider anxiously how they might lay it out, so as to do the most good and the least evil. If you give sixpence to a poor creature, when you know or may know if you think or inquire, that the sixpence will be turned at once into intoxicating drink, you are putting a stumbling-block or occasion of falling in the way of a brother or sister for whom Christ died. What is it that forbids you to do this ? Is it political economy ? Perhaps ; but it is certainly also Christian duty, Christian love. I once heard an excellent clergyman say, " Warn as you will, if I were to refuse help to the apparently hungry woman who begs me to give her food, I could not eat my own dinner in comfort ! " My answer to such a remark would be, " What does it matter whether you eat your own dinner in comfort

or not? That is a very secondary consideration, compared with the question of doing good or harm to the brother or sister for whom Christ died." People are imposed upon, as we say, not unfrequently: when they find it out they are vexed; but too often their regret is limited to their own humiliation, to their own insignificant loss; and they fail to reproach themselves for having in their carelessness put an occasion of falling in the way of the weak brother for whom Christ died.

Dear brethren, fellow-disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, what we want, in order to make us very cautious about giving relief, is not less pity, less consideration, less love; but more pity, more consideration, more love. Our blessed Lord was speaking not to mechanical creatures, but to men and women, to spiritual beings, to children of the Father in heaven, about their behaviour to other children of the same Father. "Give to him that asketh thee." Does he mean that we are to give some trifling dole to each beggar who happens to ask for it? What an unworthy interpretation to put upon his words! Does he not call upon us to treat every

suffering person as a partner, as a brother or sister? And would he allow us to say that, when we know suffering persons to be undeserving, we are discharged of all obligation towards them? Ah, let us not think so, my fellow-sinners. It is sometimes a convenient, a compendious, way of speaking, to say that such a case of distress is not a deserving one; but what we mean is, not that the undeserving have lost all claim upon us—God forbid, but that it is not wise to relieve them in the ways they would like. Careless almsgiving breeds directly, in the most obvious manner, certain vices, such as, imposture, improvidence, drunkenness, servility, religious pretence. Dreadful things to have any hand in creating! Well, what is meant when people are warned not to give to the undeserving, is that by giving to them they will certainly be promoting those vices. Give, yes, give freely; but do not give a knife to a madman who asks for it, do not give sweet poison to a child who cries for it. Give what it is really kind to give; give what will be of real advantage to those who ask; give what may do some little good to a fellow-sinner as a child of God: and

therefore give sometimes, in the tenderest Christian charity, a stern refusal. Is it charity to use the rod to a wayward rebellious child, and may it not be the truest charity to refuse a dole to the drunkard?

It is one of the good features of our history during the last few years that excellent persons have taken to heart the necessity of this caution for which I am pleading, and have laboured with considerable success to put their fellow-Christians on their guard. All that is wanted in this way is to get people to open their eyes and have regard to consequences. Why should we congratulate ourselves on increased abstinence from careless almsgiving? The one reason which outweighs all others, the one which should give comfort to Christians, is, that the poor are the better for it. I am as certain of this as of anything in the world, that the restraint of giving, including the giving which may be done out of the rates, is a great service to the poorer classes. It is zeal in behalf of the poor, earnest Christian charity, which has animated, for example, those who have promoted the organisation of charity. What sustains them in their generous labours is

not the wish to spare the pockets of the rich, but the burning desire to minister to the well-being of the poor. I can imagine, if you please, that some churls may make the phrases and warnings of those genuine philanthropists an excuse for illiberality. But I do not believe that those who put a fetter on their kindly impulses from the well-founded fear of doing harm will be made by so doing less compassionate, less charitable, less liberal. What is more probable is that they will be made less at ease in the enjoyment of their good things. I do not see how we can be intended to escape some of that discomfort, some feelings of doubt whether we ought to have so much pleasure out of the pleasant things of life whilst those whom we are bound to own as partners and brothers are so badly off. If once we saw clearly that it would be for the good of our less prosperous brothers that we should strip ourselves of our possessions and give them away, it seems clear that the law of Christ would bind us to make the sacrifice. We are not allowed to make more of our own comfort than of the real good of our brethren. But it is more than doubtful whether that would

be the best way of serving our brethren. If I had the power of persuading you who are in this church to sell all that you have and give away the proceeds to the poor, I would not do it; for it seems to me certain that such action would almost inevitably do more harm than good. But I have still less doubt that Christ demands in all his disciples such brotherly feeling, such a sense of partnership, as would be capable of that large renunciation if it were shewn to be our best way of helping the poor. And I think we are bound to be uneasy in the comfortable enjoyment of so much that our brethren have to go without. We need some such uneasiness to prick us into brotherly action; and if we have the grace to be disturbed by it, we shall not fail to find opportunities of lessening it.

Let me say here that I was asked by your vicar to speak to you to-night about almsgiving, before he kindly assigned the offertory to an object in which at this moment I am interested. My desire has been to urge upon you the deeper, more exacting, purport of those precepts in which our Lord inculcates compassion towards the needy and



suffering. There is, I am thankful to believe, much kindness in the hearts of very many towards their poorer brethren ; there is abundant discussion of the methods by which they are to be helped. But there is not nearly as much kindness as there ought to be in the hearts of professing Christians : how can there be, until each one of us is filled with the mind of him who came down from heaven to suffer and die for his brethren ? The true compassion is that which longs to make each brother better, happier, safer, as a child of God ; no compassion which stops short at the temporal condition of the poor is worthy of them or of us, or will be effectual in reaching even its own ends. The pity, the goodwill, which deserves to be called Christian love, will be powerful enough to engage all the energies of the mind, all the resources of experience, in the service of the poor. Making us more interested, more careful, more anxious, in that service, it would also restlessly impel us to give, not less but more. The true Christian will not dare to call anything that he has his own ; he will go beyond Mr. Henry George or Mr. Hyndman in confessing the claims of the great suffering

mass of humanity not only upon all that he possesses, but upon himself; he will count himself as sent into the world to administer whatever is entrusted to him to the glory of God, and therefore to the advantage of his fellows.

“But,” some may be thinking, “if we are not to discharge our charitable obligations by giving small amounts, bearing no comparison with what we spend on recreation for ourselves, to the poor people who fall into destitution around us, what is it that we are precisely to do?” That, dear brethren, is a question which we shall have to be continually asking. It seems to me that God has purposely made the helping of our brethren a difficult and perplexing business. If we find it so, he must have purposely made it so; and he must have had our better training in view. It costs much, we can plainly see, to redeem souls. Doing good is no obvious easy occupation. It is beset by great disappointments, disappointments the more and the sorer for those who conscientiously keep their eyes open to see the results of what they are doing. I believe that we shall be rightly guided,—what Christian could doubt

it?—if we seek and ask for guidance with sufficient earnestness. In all things it is the great point to get hold of the right principles, to look facts in the face, and to go on doing the best we know. St. Paul said “Let each of us please his neighbour.” But he did not stop here. It is possible to please a neighbour to his injury, and that could not be a Christian act. So he added, “for that which is good unto edifying.” There we have the true principle of relief set before us. “Let each of us give to his neighbour for that which is good unto edifying.” Our aim should be to build up the body of Christ; and therefore we shall shrink from doing anything, under any pretext, which is likely to weaken either the individual character or the binding force of domestic and social ties. It is evil to tempt sons and daughters to think that they are not responsible for their infirm parents, to tempt fathers and mothers to think that they are not responsible for their children. Our desire should be to foster and strengthen the sense of responsibility, to show the way to providence and independence, to encourage self-respect, to treat the poorest as friends and partners.

By what particular sacrifices we may best gain such ends, let us ask the Divine wisdom to shew us ; and that we may be really docile, may the Divine grace first constrain us and make us ready. We may wholesomely guard ourselves against self-deception by resolving that we will, at all events, give up some reasonable portion of our income, applying it in the most hopeful and the least dangerous ways which may be pointed out to us. Need I say that it is well to take advantage of the experience of those who ought to know better than we, how the most good is to be done ? And it is a good rule to consider first the claims that are nearest to ourselves ; to be liberal, for example, to those who have ever been in any relation of dependence towards us.

And now let me add a few words about the work which you are to-night invited to help. In view of this mission, we have been led to cast comprehensive glances over our social state, and to consider what evils specially call for our action. There is nothing that makes our hearts so sink with shame and grief within us, as the host of fallen women who form a not insignificant

section of our population. Towards such the Christian heart, the heart of any disciple of the Lord Jesus, must be drawn in special compassion. Christian women of all ranks have shown to what labours and sacrifices this compassion can prompt them. The rescue work in which they were engaged in East London last November, in which they are engaged for West London now, is worthy of the noblest days of Christendom. We have had to plan and arrange this work, not for separate Church districts, but for larger areas. Houses have been hired in which ladies take up their abode for weeks, to which their fallen sisters are invited, and in which the tenderest sympathy, guided by experience, lays itself out for the winning of one and another from shame and misery. Such heroic personal devotion will not fail to receive the trifling pecuniary aid which it requires for the instruments of its labour. I boldly offer it to you as a privilege, my Christian brethren, to claim some share in the work of redemption which I commend to your sympathy and your prayers.

## XIII.

### OATHS.

(Preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, 29th April 1883.)

“I say unto you, Swear not at all.”—MATTHEW v. 34.

THE question of oath-taking is attracting general attention just now, owing to circumstances in our Parliamentary history which excite deep public interest. Let us take a hint from these circumstances to consider the teaching of our Lord on the subject of swearing.

That teaching, it is said by some, is very simple. To those who accept his authority, Christ forbids all swearing. “I say unto you,—to you who care to be my disciples,—Swear not at all.” That this teaching was accepted and followed by the Christian Church in its infancy, is proved, it is urged, by what St. James says in his Epistle, “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by

the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath." The body called Quakers, the Society of Friends, following their founder, George Fox, have always maintained that the taking of any oath violates this precept of our Lord and of his Apostle. And for some time the Quakers endured any inconvenience and punishment rather than be unfaithful to this belief. Out of respect to their conscientious scruple a law was passed in the reign of William the Third allowing Quakers to substitute affirmation, as it is called, for an oath in giving evidence. In a recent public letter Mr. John Bright, true to his Quaker creed, has pronounced that the New Testament absolutely forbids the taking of oaths. It must be admitted that it seems to do so. If any precept ever was simple and explicit, our Lord and St. James seem to have spoken simply and explicitly. Not a few Christians are troubled in mind,—members of the Church of England and clergymen,—by the apparent contradiction between the law and the practice of Christendom on this point. The scruple is especially trying to clergymen, because the last of our Thirty-nine Articles expressly declares that, though vain and rash



swearing is forbidden, the Christian religion doth not prohibit but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth. In the teeth of this Article some clergymen are now courageously insisting that in a Christian country all oath-taking ought to be abolished, in accordance with the plain teaching of Christ.

But every one who reads the New Testament carefully is forced to see that our Lord's most positive precepts are not all to be obeyed in the letter. In the Sermon on the Mount, a very few lines below the precept on Swearing, we read, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Could anything be more explicit than this command? But would any Quaker announce that he felt bound to obey this command in the letter? There are a good many people who would be ready to take advantage of him if he did. In the Epistle of St. James, immediately after forbidding his brethren to swear, the Apostle says, "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord

shall raise him up." This direction, also, is as explicit as the other ; but the Quakers, I believe, do not observe it any more than the Church of England does. A controversy is not to be finished off by the short and easy way of appealing to the literal sense of a precept of the New Testament.

What are we to make, then, of these precepts? Well, that is just the question we ought to ask. But we should ask it, not as if we had to do with impracticable precepts which made the New Testament doctrine confused and hopeless to us, but with a teachable desire to ascertain what our Lord's meaning in them was. And there is one conclusion which we ought soon to arrive at, and which is applicable to all our Lord's commands, that he is always speaking in the spirit, and that the letter of any precept is to be interpreted by its spirit. So it is throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Christ, it is clear, is speaking to the inward man. The righteousness of the kingdom of heaven is a righteousness of the heart and disposition, not of external conduct. That is the chief respect in which it exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who looked

only to the outward conduct. You cannot, it is true, separate the outward man from the inward. Dispositions will find expression in acts ; they are worthless unless they do. An act is the natural index of a disposition. Thus, to give is the natural fruit and sign and symbol of benevolence ; benevolence which cannot give is a mere pretence and hypocrisy. But giving may also be done without benevolence ; and, in any particular case, it may be a truer benevolence to refuse than to give. These are elementary facts of observation, which we ought to bear in mind whenever we are thinking of conduct and duty at all. And especially in reading our Lord's discourses we ought so to bear them in mind as always to reach from the act mentioned to the mind which it would naturally indicate. If our Lord says, "Forgive an offence," we ought to understand that a forgiving mind is always right, but that it is another question whether any particular offence is to be passed over ; if he says, "Give to him that is in need," we ought to understand that a giving mind, a compassionate and helpful and self-postponing mind, is always right, whatever ought to be

done in the way of giving to this or that needy person ; when he bids us submit to an injury, we ought to understand that the goodwill and consideration and self-denial which can control resentment and forbear revenge are always right, though it may be wise and right to meet a particular injury with prompt punishment ; if he warns us to do our almsgiving in secret, we ought to understand that the repression of a desire to obtain credit to ourselves for our charitable deeds is always right, but that it is a matter for discretion whether we should let our gifts be known or not. Thus understood our Lord's precepts are truly Divine ; they treat man as living in the presence of God, they remind us that all inward dispositions find natural expression in outward conduct, and they set before us a standard of perfection, drawn from the nature of God himself, at which—however distant it may seem from our poor attainments—we ought unceasingly to aim. It does injustice to the teaching of Christ, to regard it as if it had to do primarily with visible acts ; to be perplexed by it in consequence of any such assumption must provoke him to say to us, as he said more

than once to the disciples around him in Galilee, "Are ye so without understanding also?"

Keeping this principle in view, that the dealing of Jesus is with the inward man, let us read what he says about swearing. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven; for it is the throne of God: nor by the earth; for it is the footstool of his feet: nor by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." The old law, to which Jesus refers, dealt with outward action; it contemplated a man pledging himself by an oath to do a certain thing, and it required him to perform, as to God whom he had invoked, the engagement by which he had thus bound himself. Our Lord's purpose is not to repeal that law, but to give a more inward one; and this more inward law of his he expresses, as he is wont to do, in the terms

of outward conduct. This, I say, was our Lord's custom ; we perceive it to have been so by observing the numerous instances of it. What, then, we have to ask, is our Lord saying to the inward man, when he lays down the law, Swear not at all ?

The question may require consideration. What does to "swear" mean ? It means, to invoke the presence of God. One who swears says, "I affirm this, or promise that, as one who knows he is in the presence of God, and who bears in mind his solemn relation to God." Can there be any harm in thus calling to mind the presence of God, in making God the witness of what we say ? If there is, what is the harm in it ? I think the answer we should be inclined to give would be of this sort,—“There can hardly be anything wrong in reminding ourselves, or in letting others know that we are reminding ourselves, of the presence of a witnessing God ; there can hardly be any harm in deliberately putting some engagement which we make under the protection of God. But to call God to witness without meaning what we say, to invoke his name without realising his presence and our responsibility to him,

must be wrong. And a habit of swearing involves, as a matter of course, that irreverence towards God." According to this view, the wrong thing in swearing would be what the Third Commandment forbids, the taking of the name of God in vain. And this is, I think, substantially the right conclusion. It does not seem to me quite easy to pronounce what the impulse is which moves people to swear. The question is complicated by what may be called secondary or derivative forms of swearing. The original intention of swearing is, as I said, to call God to witness when a statement is being made. But all kinds of oaths, besides those which directly invoke the name of God, have become common in all countries; and amongst ourselves, any vulgar use of any serious words is comprehended under the name of swearing. The Lord Jesus, in the passage we are considering, mentions several evasive forms of swearing which appear to have been in use among the Jews: men would swear by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, by their own head. Whatever has most strongly impressed the superstitious imagination has been brought in to add solemnity and fear to an affirmation.



It has been found that, before some particular altar, or with the hand on some specially sacred relics, a man who was not to be bound by an ordinary oath in the name of God would be afraid to lie. Such an oath a man would have a superstitious desire to avoid. But what is the attraction which has caused, and still causes, the common speech of men to be interspersed with those various phrases of swearing? Is it only a desire to put a false emphasis, to infuse piquancy, into trifling and empty conversation? Is it partly a desire to seem courageous, to get credit for being above the scruples which restrain more timid persons? At all events, that which offends a godly feeling in common swearing is its impiety. The swearer takes the name of God in vain. If he avoids pronouncing the name of God,—as the superstitious Jew was in abject fear of the name of his God Jehovah,—but uses phrases like those which our Lord condemns, he is assuming that he can put himself out of the presence of God; he is showing a want of reverence for ordinary human speech, and for the world around him, as if God had nothing to do with these, but could be called in or kept at a distance at

the man's pleasure. In violently profane language there is audacious impiety; in the more guarded use of trivial forms of swearing there is something of irreverence, perhaps only a childishness or negative irreverence unworthy of a serious Christian. The Christian kind of speech is simple and straightforward; the Christian man who has respect for himself and for human speech will not suppose that what he says needs to be backed up by unmeaning oaths. The law of the kingdom of Heaven enjoins, Swear not at all; speak simply as one who speaks the truth and expects to be believed; speak as being always in the presence of God, who can see behind a lie, and to whom thou art always and everywhere responsible.

If our Lord, then, as everything seems to suggest, is here giving a direction for the inward government of the mind, and warning his disciples against using language which implies irreverence or unbelief, what has his command, "Swear not at all," to do with the imposing of oaths in courts of justice or on other solemn occasions? It has only to do with such a practice so far as it may lead to a careless use of sacred names. That

there is such a possibility is a fact to be seriously considered. The multiplication of formal oaths is sure to lead to irreverence ; and regard for the Third Commandment, or for the spiritual meaning of the precept of our Lord and his Apostle, would undoubtedly prompt us to beware of such multiplication. But to suppose that the tendering or the taking of an oath on a solemn occasion must violate that precept seems to shew a misapprehension of it. That a man who is about to give evidence, for example, which may imperil the fortunes or character or life of a fellow-man should be urged to remember that he is speaking in the presence of God and should be called upon to admit that he is so speaking, has nothing of the irreverence and unbelief which our Lord condemns. Is not the Quaker's affirmation, given in the same solemn manner as an oath, substantially the same thing as an oath ? He will say indeed that it is to him, in solemnity and binding force, the same thing as an oath. Yes, and he might as reasonably object to making an affirmation as to taking an oath. A Quaker might, I mean,—who believes in God and desires to speak as always in his presence.

When he makes his affirmation, the thought of God, if he has any piety, will pass through his mind ; and why should the name of God not pass through his lips when the idea of God is passing through his mind ? To argue that the placing of your statement under the protection of God on a solemn occasion must lead to your making statements recklessly on other occasions, has about as much sense as to argue that the meeting together for common prayer in churches must make you careless about praying out of church. The reason for a public oath is that the occasion on which it is tendered is an exceptional and important one ; and to be reminded on such occasions that we speak in the presence of God and under responsibility to him is likely, according to all that we acknowledge and practise in other matters, to strengthen and not to weaken our habitual feeling of being in God's presence and responsible to him.

If then our Lord, when he said, Swear not at all, was not speaking with a superficiality most contrary to the whole method of his teaching and intolerably unworthy of him, our Thirty-ninth Article is right. His prohibition of swearing condemns the mind that

would indulge in profane or silly swearing, the irreverent and godless mind ; and it encourages rather than forbids a Christian man to swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

The question of the imposition of this or that oath is one of delicate moral expediency. The magistrate will naturally and reasonably desire, in acts of grave public concern, to bring to bear upon the conscience the strongest considerations he can in favour of veracity and fidelity to engagements. If a man is unwilling to be sworn because it would make him more afraid to bear false witness against a neighbour or to break his pledge, there seems to be good reason for compelling him to take the oath. If, however, he is unwilling to be sworn because to him to take an oath would be to take God's name in vain, we may lament his want of spiritual understanding, or we may deplore his unbelief, but in his case the reason *for* the oath is turned into a reason *against* it. Who would wish to see a Quaker coerced into taking an oath, or made to suffer penalties of depriva-

tion or imprisonment for refusing it? We are glad that the Quaker should be allowed to affirm,—that is, to swear without audibly pronouncing the name of God,—not because we think he understands Scripture reasonably, but because in his case the oath with the name of God would produce the opposite of the intended effect, would not solemnise his thoughts and strengthen his conscience, but would confuse his conscience and humiliate his self-respect. To force the name of God into the mouths of persons who, from whatever cause, whether a misguided opinion or an avowed disbelief in God, cannot speak it with reverence, is—I will not say uncharitable, or a violation of the rights of opinion, or a breach of civil equality, but—self-stultifying and dishonourable to God. Reverence is the primary and ultimate consideration in this matter. Where an oath is or has become a mere formality, reverence prescribes that it should be abolished, and no affirmation or virtual oath introduced in its place. Where there is a presumption that an oath is still an aid to truth-telling and fidelity,—as in our courts of law,—there we may conclude that it is desirable to preserve it, but on condition

that it should be reverently administered and reverently taken, and that the name of God should be omitted from the oath for all those to whom the naming of it would be to take it in vain.

So far as we may have anything to do with the moulding of public policy, these, I believe, are the principles which the teaching of Christ would commend to our adoption; and the loyal Christian cannot act in any grave matter without considering how Christ would have him act. But let us not think to-day of these words of his, "Swear not at all," in connection with public controversy only. Let us ask whether we have anything to learn from them for the regulation of our own dispositions and conduct. Do we say that we have no temptation to swear; that neither the careless invocation of Divine names, nor the use of trivial and unmeaning forms of swearing, has any attraction to us? That is well; but we are not therefore necessarily keeping our Lord's word as it may be kept. We are not doing that, unless we feel that God's presence is continually about us; unless we therefore shrink from any use of words which must be displeasing



to him ; unless equivocation offends us as an impiety ; unless our utterance tends naturally to frank and sincere and straightforward speech.

“ Let all thy converse be sincere,  
Thy conscience as the noonday clear ;  
Think how all-seeing God thy ways  
And all thy secret thoughts surveys.”

Nothing short of that sincerity and clearness will satisfy the demand of our Lord Jesus Christ. In seeking that, you will not be troubled too much by scruples about expression. Exactitude of statement is a good and desirable thing ; but do not forget that we have the high and serious objects of good faith and openness to strive after. Let us long that others should believe us and trust us ; and let us take care that we give them good reason for doing so. Let it not be our chief aim to fence ourselves about with unimpeachable statements, and to speak with so much caution that no one shall be able to find us out in an untruth ; but let us rather strive to communicate truthfully and trustfully, as subjects of the kingdom of heaven with fellow-citizens, as members of the Lord Jesus Christ with fellow-members. The

influence of the world is known to be favourable to dissimulation and artificiality of speech ; let us do our part to counteract that influence and to promote wholesome and edifying intercourse. We may have to guard also against some influences of religion ; for religion has its affectations and its conventional phrases, and has a dangerous tendency towards hypocrisy. In the consciousness of God's presence, in the sacredness of his creation, let us find our protection from all insincerity, worldly and religious ; opening our hearts to him against whose eyes they cannot be closed, confessing him to be the Judge between us and our brethren, growing in hatred of the spirit of lies as the enemy alike of God and of man.

## XIV.

### MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

(Preached at Christ Church, St. Marylebone, 17th June 1883.)

“Joint heirs of the grace of life.”—I PETER iii. 7.

IT is of the husband and the wife that St. Peter is speaking here as having a common inheritance. He is urging that they should live together in the same spiritual hopes and aspirations, and therefore in the harmony and mutual respect which are indispensable to such a partnership. We can apply the thought more widely, and dwell on the influence which common spiritual hopes ought to exert on all human beings who are brought into contact with each other. But I wish to speak first of a matter directly affecting the conjugal relation,—the proposed repeal of the law which forbids a man to marry his deceased wife's sister.

Last Monday evening, as you are aware, this proposal received the support of a majority in the House of Lords. It seems to be taken for granted that this vote was a decisive one, and that marriage with a deceased wife's sister will before long be legal in this country. Any serious change in the relations of our domestic life must be regarded as of deep public interest, and there are many who think that the change in question will be a disastrous one. The vote in the House of Lords has a specially discomposing character for us as members of the Church of England, because it showed very nearly the whole of the Episcopate in opposition to a decided majority of the lay peers. The question is one involving considerations of religion, and the proposed relaxation is regarded by most of those who are unfavourable to it as being condemned both by Scripture and the Church. It is said that when it is finally sanctioned by the legislature, the Church and the English law will be on an important point in antagonism the one to the other. Certainly, the immense majority of the clergy are opposed to the change, and they protest against it on

religious grounds, as being not only undesirable for social and domestic reasons, but as an unwarrantable infraction of the tradition of the Church.

It cannot be denied that the ancient law of the Church, valid in this country up to the present time, has forbidden that a man should marry his wife's sister. You are familiar with the "Table of kindred and affinity, wherein whosoever are related are forbidden in Scripture and our Laws to marry together." This Table was drawn up by Archbishop Parker in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but it embodies the rules of the Church Law, called the Canon Law, which was in force before the Reformation. The Table is framed on the principle that, in the eye of religion, affinity, or connection by marriage, is the same thing as kindred, or relationship by blood. But the principle has not been rigorously carried out in Christian history. That a man should marry his wife's sister has never been thought to be the same thing as that he should marry his own sister. Dispensations allowing the marriage with a wife's sister for special reasons have not been infrequent. In England such marriages

were valid before the year 1835, when they had been contracted in a foreign country in which they were legal. It is easy to say that a man and his wife are one, and therefore that his wife's sister becomes to him the same as his own sister ; but the consciousness of Christendom has always seen a great difference between the affinity and the kindred. You would not believe any one who should say now in the heat of controversy that to him a man married to his deceased wife's sister was the same as a man married to his own sister. The legislature of England is claiming the right to reconsider a social rule which no one denies to have been the general rule of the Catholic Church, but which has always had exceptions which gave no shock to the common conscience. In thus acting the English legislature is asserting a liberty which is by no means a new one.

We are accustomed in this country to pay more deference to Scriptural authority than to a tradition of the Church ; and it is maintained that the marriage in question is forbidden in the Bible. This, however, is easier to affirm than to prove. There is a text in the book of Leviticus about which

controversy has raged, and of which the meaning is by no means clear, which is adduced as laying down the law in the matter ; but, if the prohibition were perfectly clear and explicit, it would not follow that it would be binding on us. There are a multitude of Jewish regulations, including some of great importance relating to marriage, which no one supposes to be binding on Christians. By itself, a Levitical rule is nothing to us. But then it is contended that the prohibition is sustained by the principle—the universal and Christian principle—that a man and his wife become one flesh. From this it is inferred that his wife's relations are to him as his own. But, as a matter of fact, every one knows that they are not. The law does not treat them so. And why should one particular inference be drawn more than a hundred others which would be manifestly absurd ? The law that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they two shall be one flesh, was intended to apply to the lives of the two ; husband and wife were to be one in interest, in companionship, in sympathy, each associated with the other more closely than with any other



person. That is the Divinely ordained ideal of married life. No doubt one natural effect of it is to create a special tie between the husband and the wife's relatives; but it is too much to say that it makes the wife's sister as near to him as his own sister. And this close union is only declared to subsist during the lifetime of the two parties. There are those who cannot bear to think of the special bond of husband and wife being broken by death; they would not only regard with reverence the partner, left solitary on earth, who clings with unabated conjugal affection to the partner in the other world,—they would put second marriage under a ban, as violating the true sacredness of the one abiding union. But this is not the law of the Church. The Church Catholic has always allowed a man to marry again. The pledge in our Marriage Office is “so long as ye both shall live,” “till death us do part.” So that, after the death of the wife, the husband and wife have ceased in the eye of the Canon Law to be one flesh. Otherwise no second marriage would be permissible. Therefore, if the fact that husband and wife are one flesh makes her sister his sister, when they

have ceased to be one flesh it might reasonably be argued that he is no longer under the same bond to treat her as a sister.

The truth is that no logical inference, except such as relates to the personal union between man and wife, can be safely drawn from the law that the man and the wife become one flesh. The question how far and in what respect a wife's sister is to be regarded and treated as her husband's own sister is one for feeling and experience and reason to settle. The particular question, Is it, or is it not, permissible for a man, after his wife's death, to marry her sister?—is really left open, so far as any direct authority of Scripture is concerned. What was the Jewish rule does not signify in the least to us. And there is no saying of our Lord or of any one of his Apostles, which can be quoted as explicitly determining the point.

But we might be sure that a practice which the Christian Church for so many ages has held to be in general desirable must have much to be said in its favour. In the region of feeling and experience, with reference to the highest ideal of domestic and social life, there must have been unquestion-

able advantages in the law which forbade a man to look to his wife's sister as one whom he might marry. I should think very poorly of the intelligence or sensibility of any one, however decidedly he might conclude in favour of the proposed repeal, who could not see and admit that there would be loss as well as gain in the change. It has been a good thing that so emphatic a tribute as that of the existing prohibition should be paid to the unity of conjugal life. It has been good that the circle of sisterhood should be enlarged; that his wife's sisters should be sacred to a man as his own sisters, and that there should be every encouragement for the growth of a domestic intimacy within the bonds of allied families, untroubled by the thought of possible matrimony. I think it quite possible to believe that the time has now come for repealing the prohibition, and yet not to regard it as an evil that the prohibition has existed in past time.

From the point of view of the happiness and elevation of domestic life, the question is one of great delicacy and difficulty, and cannot be fully discussed here. There are many indirect influences of the one rule and

the other which it may require a knowledge which all do not possess to take into account, and between the respective weights of which it is by no means easy for any one to strike a balance. There is one obvious effect which must follow from a change of the existing law. The marriageable sister of a deceased wife will no longer be able to remain with her brother-in-law and take charge of his children. No one else is so well qualified, it is justly urged, for this charge. There will be, to a certain number of families, a distinct loss when this arrangement becomes impossible. On the other hand, in some cases—it may be presumed—the widower will avail himself of the new liberty to make his sister-in-law the step-mother of his children. In the middle and higher ranks of English life will not the loss in this respect be more than the gain? Not improbably: but one who is considering the interest of society as a whole will not take into account the convenience of the upper classes only. Amongst the poor, the sister of a deceased wife cannot have her separate rooms, and therefore the arrangement which has been so justly valued amongst the rich is almost

an impossible one. In that class the marriage which it is proposed to make legal has often taken place in violation of the law, the clergyman not knowing how the parties were connected, the parties very possibly being ignorant of the law. I have become aware of several such cases myself; and I daresay that in these cases there has been as much real justification as in those in which money and influence have availed to procure a Papal dispensation. So that, with reference to this point of the charge of children after their mother's death, we may have to set what is on the whole the interest of the richer class against what is on the whole the interest of the poorer class. And our legislation is not yet apt to be too favourable to the poor.

I do not know that laymen, such as the lay peers of this country, are on the whole less qualified to estimate the various bearings of an intricate social subject like this than the ecclesiastical peers and the clergy. We should not willingly impute to them that they care less for the purity and the happiness of the home. The difference between the two classes probably is, that the laymen

are more alive to the movements of opinion and custom in the world as it is, and the clergy pay more deference to the ecclesiastical tradition. The legislature of this country cannot be indifferent to what is going on in other countries of the world. And the liberty of marrying a deceased wife's sister exists now in the other Protestant countries of Europe, in the United States, and in most of our Colonies. This fact is that which perhaps makes it most difficult to defer the change long in England. It is not that we are obliged to follow a multitude in doing evil ; but it becomes impossible, under these circumstances, to preserve that social feeling of repugnance to these marriages which will alone have power to prevent them. If indeed we were informed that in the United States or our Colonies the liberty had been the parent of deplorable consequences, and that thoughtful religious persons were tracing to it any degradation of family life, the action of other communities might be a warning rather than an attraction to us. But this is not so. I believe there is no suspicion that family life has suffered from this cause. People have always been afraid that the

removal of a restriction will let loose a multitude of evils which have been held back by it; and the apprehension has in most cases been falsified by experience. So it appears to have been, where the experiment has been tried, with regard to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The change, in England as elsewhere, will in all probability leave family life very much what it was before.

Yet who could wish that there should not be jealous anxiety in this country with regard to any proposal for tampering with the law of marriage? We do well to regard the best features of English family life as the most precious inheritance which we have received from our fathers, and to be anxious about handing it down unimpaired to our children. And it is a right instinct which dreads to regard the institutions of the home as mere secular arrangements springing out of the struggle for existence, and such as we are at liberty to modify at our pleasure. The nation which ceases to regard marriage and the home with reverence is making itself the prey of human passions and caprice. Let us, for our part, hold fast the belief that



they are Divine creations, designed for the growth of human kind, in both its sexes, towards its ideal perfection.

The man and the woman, says St. Peter, are heirs together—joint heirs—of the grace of life. That is the kind of thought which should draw upwards our views and practice in relation to the conjugal union. “The grace of life:” what is this? We might be inclined to take it as meaning, the heavenly beauty of life, all that is gracious in life. That would be an excellent sense for the words. So understood, they would teach the married pair always to be looking for high blessings, and to remember that the dignity, the richness, the usefulness and happiness, of life are not to be realised by them without mutual consideration and loving fidelity. But it appears to be more consistent with St. Peter’s other language to lay stress here upon “life.” It is life, heavenly life, that is the grace or boon of which husband and wife, under the Gospel, are inheritors. It is a strong point with St. Peter, on which he insists much, that Christians should set their minds upon a future of glory and of life of which they have the promise. It is the

blessedness of believers in Christ, that they have been begotten unto a living hope, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. This inheritance is for those who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. St. Peter connects this salvation with the revealing of Jesus Christ. His conclusion is, "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." There is a difficulty in putting the expectations of the Apostles into other language than that which they used themselves. We see that St. Peter and St. Paul did not habitually think of the death of each Christian as his entrance upon the glory of which they speak. They do not seem to distinguish sharply between this life and the life after death. There was a grace coming; Jesus Christ was to be revealed; the sufferings of Christ were to be followed by glories. Those are expressions of St. Peter. St. Paul speaks of his fellow-believers as having been made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; destined, if only they

suffered with Christ, to be also glorified with him. There was to be a revealing, not only of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and his glory, but of his brethren the sons of God, and of their glory. The whole creation, in St. Paul's view, was waiting in earnest expectation for the revealing of the sons of God. The glory of the children of God, when it was fulfilled, would not only emancipate *them* from all that fettered and encumbered them; but it would be the setting free of the rest of the world also.—There is a difficulty for us, we must admit, in realising exactly what the Apostles were anticipating; but the substance of it, it is evident, filled their minds and fired their imaginations and exalted their conduct. They saw in the future, Christ becoming truly known, his human brethren having fellowship with him in faith and knowledge and victory, and so entering into the blessedness reserved for them. Perhaps this glory of Christ and his brethren seemed to them about to burst forth more completely in their own generation or soon after, than we who look back can perceive that it did. We cannot fix on any date in the Apostolic age, at which the

brethren then living can be supposed to have realised their full salvation and blessedness. It has become necessary to us, much more than it was to the Apostles, to look upon the world beyond the grave, the life which begins at death, as the scene of man's highest emancipation. The glory which is to transfigure the earth has been working not summarily but slowly and in the way of gradual struggle and development. But it should still be the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of the Father through him, which awakens and feeds our hopes, as it did the hope of the Apostles. We ought not to be fixing our anticipations upon being individually secured from suffering and stimulated by a perpetual succession of holy pleasures. The hope of this kind of felicity is not exalting, not saving, like the nobler Apostolic hope. In the Apostolic age, the hope that Christ would be unveiled and would subdue all things to himself, was the spring, not only of a joy unspeakable and full of glory, but of energy and effort and patience.

So St. Peter bade each married pair, as man and wife, remember that they were joint heirs of the wonderful grace or boon of a life

to be shared with Christ and their brethren, and guard themselves from any conduct or dispositions that would hinder their aspirations and prayers. Let them bear in mind that they were children of God ; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ ; waiting for a salvation, a redemption, an emancipation, which was assured to them. These noble convictions and hopes would best preserve them from the temptations of married life.

In all the relations of human life the same truth holds good. It is the heaven above, beneath, beyond, which must dignify this earth. We want the Christian faith and hope to sweeten and purify our earthly existence, to make life worth living. Our evil passions will be too strong for us if we depend only on interest and custom and heredity to preserve our morality. Let us be ever looking upwards and forwards. The glory of Christ is beckoning to us, that glory of the Son of God and of the Son of man which can only be fulfilled in conquering sin and misery and drawing men to the Father. See whether, in contemplating Christ with faith and hope, you can bear the intrusion of arrogant and tyrannical impulses, of discontent

and despondency, of disloyal and debasing desires. No, Christ in you, the hope of glory, will make you ashamed of such fleshly tempers, and raise you above them, and quicken you with that mind of the Spirit which is life and peace and freedom.

## XV.

### THE ADVANCE OF WOMEN.

(Read at a Church Conference, 3d July 1884.)

I THINK that an advance of women towards a condition of equality with men is a fact which no competent observer could fail to recognise as characteristic of the history of our time. Every one sees that women are allowed to have more, in the way of powers and opportunities, and to do more, in the way of activity and employment, than they had or did a generation ago. It is obvious also that this movement in advance has not come to a pause, but is still on its way. There are persons who have assisted in obtaining one or other of the concessions which have been made to women, but who dislike extremely the idea of the equality of the sexes. They have treated, perhaps, the particular concession to which they have been favourable as an



isolated incident, and have anxiously dissociated it from any general movement. Or they have endeavoured to form and retain some theory of a distinct place which women are made to fill, and with which the idea of equality with men is out of harmony. Every movement which has modified human life has been supported from many motives and on various principles, not always consistent with each other. Apart from any statement of reasons or ideals, it appears to me indisputable that this advance of women has been, as a matter of fact, towards equality with men. I say, towards, or in the direction of, equality. I know of none of the changes, the sum of which makes up the advance in question, which has rendered women less equal, of none which has not made them more equal, with men. Whether we approve of it or not, that has been the actual tendency of the movement; and it may as well be frankly recognised. At the same time it should be observed that to recognise this tendency is a very different thing from laying down a law that the sexes are equal. That has not been the watchword of the movement; nor has any such axiom been

even in the minds of most of those who have promoted it.

The advance has been along three main lines, that of education, that of employments, and that of civil franchises. Perhaps I ought to add, as a fourth, that of religious activity, or of the enthusiasm of humanity.

In the department of education, Queen's College was established in 1848 by Professors of King's College, in order to offer to women the same kind of education, equally solid and equally comprehensive, as was given by the same teachers to young men. These two Colleges are professedly Church institutions. Other steps, having for their object the better instruction of the masses of the people, and abundantly sanctioned by the Church, ought to have a conspicuous place in the history of the advance of women. The public-spirited Churchmen who organised the system of elementary education which preceded Mr. Forster's Act, thinking only of education and not at all of women's rights, in nearly all respects placed the two sexes on the same footing. In the provision of schools and teaching, in the system of inspection and examination, in the appointment and training

of pupil-teachers, in the establishment of residentiary training colleges, those founders may be said—broadly speaking—to have put no difference between boys and girls, between young men and young women. They hardly bore in mind as much as they should have done—for example, in respect of the burdens laid upon girl pupil-teachers—the essential differences between the sexes. Of later years, almost everything that has been done to give a better education to girls and young women has consisted in extending to them the methods already in use for boys and young men. It has been the distinction of Girton College that its founders have resolutely sought from the beginning the admission of the weaker sex to the same studies and examinations with the stronger. And those who adopted this principle have induced the Universities to advance, in the remarkable concessions they have already made, along this line.

In the struggle for the opening of employments to women, the van was led by Miss Elizabeth Garrett (now Mrs. Anderson), who enjoys the honour which she well deserves for the courage, the good taste and good

temper, and the indomitable persistency, with which she has contended in behalf of her sex. What was demanded was that the medical profession should be opened to women on the same terms as to men; and it is this demand that has been conceded. This triumph has been accompanied by many gains in other employments. To what limit the advance will be pushed along this line it would be rash to prophesy. But our good English custom, of moving slowly, and testing the security of each step before we take another, may be trusted to save us from any disastrous experiment.

We are moving in this cautious manner in extending civil responsibilities to women. Women may vote for vestrymen, for guardians of the poor, for members of School Boards. They may be guardians, and they may sit on School Boards. These rights are all freely exercised, and no one is heard to propose that women should be deprived of them. At this moment women cannot vote for members of Parliament. But the discussion and the division on Mr. Woodall's motion announce with sufficient plainness that this franchise also will not long be withheld.

With regard to the governing of the country, the manifest tendency of affairs is towards a state of things in which women will share alike with men. It has been a strange anomaly, indeed, that a constitution which places a woman on the throne should forbid a woman to vote for a member of Parliament.

The sphere of practical religion and "good works" has always been thought a suitable one for women. But in this also, during the last generation, women have not merely been active and devoted; we have seen them playing independent and public parts, such as used to be thought incompatible with the shrinking modesty and submissiveness which were specially commended in women. We have learned to admire women who have been moved by genuine zeal and compassion to exhort audiences, to face repulsive topics, and to take the lead in agitations. Things are done by women in the cause of humanity which would formerly have been condemned as unwomanly, but which now hardly call forth a protest.

But in the minds of many, including not a few of those who have been in hearty sympathy with this enlargement of the oppor-

tunities and responsibilities of women, as well as those who have opposed it or held aloof from it, there has been an anxious doubt whether the Christian religion gave its sanction to the movement. Some have looked primarily to the tradition of Christendom; others to the direct authority of the Bible as expressed in textual precepts. But on this question it is not supposed that there has been any divergence between Catholic tradition and the language of Scripture. With regard to marriage, it can hardly be contended that these two authorities speak with the same voice. In the New Testament there is no such praise of virginity, in comparison with marriage, as became nearly universal in the fourth century and after. Those who advocate the superior holiness of the unmarried state are not likely to appeal to texts of Scripture. But with regard to the "subjection of women," I am not aware that there is any alleged departure, or development, in the traditional sentiment of Christendom from what is supposed to be laid down in the New Testament. On the side of those who fear that women are now moving out of their proper place, Catholic

and Protestant would equally quote texts of Scripture as laying down the Christian law in this matter. The appeal, therefore, is a simpler one than it would be if we had to balance the authority of the Fathers against that of the Apostles.

There are passages in the New Testament which inculcate the submission of women in strong terms. Most of these relate expressly to the behaviour of wives. In the teaching of our Lord himself as reported in the Gospels, I think there is no injunction relating to the special duty of women, whether in marriage or out of it. The precepts to which we have to refer are found in the writings of St. Paul and St. Peter. I will quote first those which seem to speak of women in general as well as of wives. "Let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church" (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35). It is not always easy to be sure whether the Greek word *γυνή* means a wife or a woman. Here



the translators, both of the authorised and the revised versions, have rendered it by woman. But the mention of their husbands suggests that wives were in St. Paul's mind, and this supposition is confirmed by the reference to "the law," for it seems that the law can only be the saying in Genesis (iii. 16): "Thy husband shall rule over thee." There is a similar passage, subject to a similar doubt, in Timothy: "Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (ii. 11, 12); for the Apostle goes on, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." There is a further reason, of which I shall speak presently, for concluding that it is upon married women that silence in the church is imposed by these injunctions. Other passages enjoining submission upon wives are made the more familiar to us by being incorporated into our Marriage Service. They are from the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians and the First Epistle of Peter. They are extremely emphatic; no one can argue that they do not prescribe the general submission of the wife to the husband: "As the church is

subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything." But, as regards the subjection of women other than wives, the law of the New Dispensation as well as of the old appears to be silent.

It would be artificial to separate married life altogether from the movement which we are considering. Married life cannot but be affected by any change in the condition of unmarried women. The powers of married women, as regards property and children, have been increased, as a matter of fact, in an important degree by recent legislation. But it is chiefly on behalf of women without husbands that the struggle has been carried on. The openings that have been won have been mainly for unmarried women and widows. Is there anything in the New Testament that bears upon the question whether women apart from married life should have more or less of freedom and power, more or less of equality with men?

It is a noticeable feature of our Lord's ministry, that he was attended in his journeyings by women as well as men (Luke viii. 2, 3). Some of these were married women or widows; what Mary Magdalene was, or

Susanna, we have no means of knowing. Between them, they ministered of their substance to the needs of Jesus and his companions. These women, or some of them, continued to be with the Apostles after the death of Jesus. They must have left their homes to devote themselves to this attendance on the Prophet of Nazareth. In the home of Lazarus and his sisters, the two women, Martha and Mary, are more conspicuous as disciples of the Lord than their brother. So far as we can draw any inference at all from the action of our Lord as recorded in the Gospels, we should reasonably conclude that he encouraged a certain freedom and independence in the conduct of women, such as would excite criticism in the present day. And this conclusion becomes far more significant when we recall the conditions of Oriental life with regard to the relations of the sexes, and the disorganised state of Jewish society in that age. Whilst women were coming into prominence, and acting for themselves, and leaving their homes, as followers of Jesus, no hint is given that they would have been more in their places under the domestic roof, or that they ought to have

left the active support of One who was a centre of surging political agitation to their husbands and brothers.

The excitement of the Day of Pentecost manifested itself in irregular utterances, which seemed to unfriendly observers as if they might have been caused by intoxication. In this excitement women had their part as well as men. "These are not drunken," said St. Peter. "This is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel: Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." And the precedent set on the first day was followed throughout the Apostolic age. Women were in the habit of receiving, and freely yielding themselves to, the inspiration which found utterance in prophesying. Corinth was a place in which it must have been peculiarly necessary to put safeguards round feminine self-respect, and the Church at Corinth was not a very quiet and orderly society. But St. Paul assumed that women prayed and prophesied in the presence of believers of both sexes. He prescribed that a woman praying or prophesying should have her head veiled (1 Cor. xi. 5). The assumption that women were accustomed both to pray and to

prophecy in public is very difficult to reconcile with what St. Paul says a little farther on in the same Epistle: "Let the women keep silence in the churches. . . . It is shameful for a woman to speak in the church." The two passages will not contradict one another if we understand that in the latter the Apostle has wives in view, in the former, unmarried women and widows. On no other hypothesis but this does it seem possible to bring St. Paul into consistency with himself. It does not remove all difficulty. For, as is felt now with regard to the Parliamentary suffrage, it could not have been easy to allow a freedom to young unmarried women and to refuse it to the married; and we should have expected that St. Paul would have marked the distinction more plainly, instead of using the same ambiguous word, *γυνή*, in both places. But it is evident that if women who had husbands were bidden to keep silence in the churches, no such restriction was put upon other women. The women who prayed extempore and delivered impassioned exhortations in a Corinthian assembly are not told that such action is unbecoming and unfeminine, and that they ought to restrain their feelings and their

tongues ; they are only bidden to wear the woman's veil when they speak in public.

It is again the more impressive that women should have been allowed to prophesy freely, when we perceive that prophesying became a difficult practice to deal with, and was indulged in a manner which led to intolerable disorder. St. Paul insists firmly that the impulse to prophesy did not necessarily carry with it a Divine sanction. This impulse was to be subjected to control and regulation. Whatever impulse might take possession of man or woman, all things were to be done decently and in order. After a time it began to be recognised that the gift of prophesying did not manifest itself unaccountably, but was an endowment belonging to certain persons. If there were men who had this gift, there were also women who, being perceived to have it, were allowed to exercise it. In the house of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven, there were four daughters of his, virgins, who prophesied. There is nothing, so far as I am aware, to show that women were anywhere included amongst the "elders" of the Churches. But I am not sure that prophesying would not, to

our modern feeling, seem less feminine than acting as an elder. And it is obvious that women were frankly recognised as playing important and independent parts in the action of the Churches as they began to be organised. Phœbe, a servant or deaconess of the Church at Cenchreæ, was travelling to Rome on Church business. It was a matter of public importance that Euodia and Syntyche, fellow-labourers with St. Paul, should act in harmony at Philippi. Many other women are named by St. Paul, apart from husbands or fathers or brothers, as doing work for the Church. And the curious precedence assigned to Prisca or Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, has struck all readers: "Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus . . . unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. xvi. 3). "When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully" (Acts xviii. 26). From what we find in the Acts and the Epistles we may infer that it was a general rule in the Early Church that women, if they showed that they had gifts, were not prevented by any assumptions as to



the modesty and submissiveness that ought to characterise their sex, from exercising them; that there was a very remarkable absence of restrictions on the free action of women who had no husbands; but that wives were not held to have the same kind of freedom as other women. I have called attention to the customs and prejudices and dangers of the society of that age as making this independent activity and responsibility of Christian women the more significant. It is Oriental and Greek life that we have, in thinking of the Church of this period, almost exclusively to take into account. Amongst the Romans, law and custom were far more favourable to the dignity of women than they were in the East and in Greece, and they became increasingly so under the Empire. Sir Henry Maine makes the remarkable observation, that "no society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle Roman law" (*Ancient Law*, p. 158). But the New Testament Christianity had its beginnings in Asia and in Greece, and therefore the freedom and activity which it allowed

to women are set off by the contrast supplied by Eastern and Greek manners.

The influence of Hebrew traditions is no doubt perceptible in the earliest Christian sentiments on this as on other subjects. Those who had been fed from their infancy upon the Hebrew Scriptures, and had learnt how Deborah the wife of Lapidoth judged Israel, were not likely to think meanly of the rights or powers of women. If Deborah composed that thrilling song of hers, we can understand that Barak should have said to her : " If thou wilt go with me, then I will go : but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." And Deborah was only one of a succession of Hebrew prophetesses, whom their sex did not forbid to use their inspiration in the service of their people. Considering that we also have been brought up to admire not only the Deborah of the Bible, but the " great Elizabeth " of our own history, we cannot assume that the actual sentiment and practice of the Jews who accepted Jesus would necessarily be in harmony with their noblest traditions. But they certainly had not to unlearn what their own Scriptures had taught them, when they found themselves moved by

the spirit of Christ to allow free play to the gifts with which women might be endowed.

I have admitted, however, that a special kind of submission to their husbands is enjoined upon wives in the New Testament; and that it would be very difficult to raise other women to freedom, and at the same time to keep down wives in a condition of servitude. This difficulty, I have hinted, must have existed and have been tested in the Apostolic age, It is the feeling of many in the present day that the general subjection of women must be maintained, as the only way of preserving the subjection of wives. If, it is contended, the doctrine of the New Testament, "Wives, be in subjection to your husbands," is to prevail, the female sex must be trained from infancy in habits of subjection.

But there are considerations which may modify our view of this alleged doctrine. We know that precepts are not always to be taken in the unqualified literal sense. We do not feel ourselves bound to swear not at all, to hate father and mother, to give to every one that asks, to turn the left cheek to him who smites us on the right. Let us look at the language of St. Paul and St.

Peter concerning the subjection of wives. In Ephesians (v. 21) St. Paul bids all Christians subject themselves one to another, and makes the subordination of wives to their husbands only a part of this subjection : "Subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ. Wives, to your own husbands." The more particular precept must be looked at in the light of the more general. St. Peter also (ii. 13) similarly begins : "Be subject to every human ordinance or creation for the Lord's sake ;" and then he enjoins submission to the king, to other rulers, to masters, to husbands. Later, in the same epistle, St. Peter says : "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another." According to the Apostolic teaching, if all Christians are to subject themselves one to another, it will follow that husbands are to subject themselves to their wives. St. Paul enjoins this in the same breath and the same terms in which he bids wives subject themselves to their husbands. The simple phrase, therefore, "subject yourselves, or be subject," does not settle the matter. That refers primarily to an inward temper, to the suppression and submission of self, which is

to be put into act with a due consideration of circumstances and relations. I do not doubt that St. Paul held that a wife ought actually to give way to her husband's will more than a husband to that of his wife. But that would be for various reasons and in various degrees. It would not be implied without limit in the phrase, "subject yourselves." The Apostle had in view the actual condition of things before him. He saw a legal and actual subjection of the wife as he saw a legal and actual subjection of the slave. He is equally emphatic in enjoining submission at the same moment on the wife and on the slave: "Slaves, be obedient to your masters, with fear and trembling." So is St. Peter: "Slaves, be in subjection to your masters with all fear; in like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." The subjection of slaves, and the subjection of wives, may claim exactly similar support from these Scriptural precepts. It has been argued with manifest plausibility that Scripture sanctions slavery; but we in these days neither use the argument nor accept it. We believe that St. Paul desired that the slaves of his day should acquiesce in their legal

condition, and what we may say about wives is that he certainly desired that they also should acquiesce in their legal condition. But it does not follow that he would have deprecated any alteration in the condition of wives or of slaves.

But St. Paul, we must admit, had more to say about the conjugal relation. He compares it with the relation between Christ and the Church. He dignifies and hallows—and, it may reasonably be urged, enforces—the subjection of the wife to the husband by linking it with the subjection of the Church to Christ. He has not only the legal condition of the married pair, he has also an ideal relation, before his mind; the husband is to love and cherish, the wife to respond; and the result is to be the closest possible union of heart and soul. The Apostles, it may be observed, do not sanction the modern sentiment which regards love as a peculiarly feminine attribute; they make it the duty of the man to love, that of the woman to yield. That the ideal of St. Paul and St. Peter implies that the wife is the weaker vessel, and under normal circumstances will best seek the conjugal unity, which is the final

aim, by a certain voluntary dependence and readiness to give way, is not, I think, to be denied. Such an ideal seems to me to be in harmony with the facts and laws of Nature. It would be a folly indeed for a wife to sacrifice unity to an assertion of equality and independence. But the ideal unity, let it be clearly understood, is no more to be gained by letting the husband lord it over the wife than by setting her to fight with him for equality. It depends even more upon the love, which essentially means self-surrender,<sup>1</sup> upon the paying of honour to the weaker vessel, on the part of the husband, than upon the readiness to yield on the part of the wife. External arrangements, such as legal rights and provisions, which warn the husband to treat the wife as an equal rather than as a slave, will help and not hinder the attainment of the Apostolic ideal.

Beyond and above the ideal of conjugal union, there is present to the Christian mind the ideal of the union of Christians with Christ and with God. And with this in view, St. Paul speaks thus: "There can be

<sup>1</sup> "With my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow."



neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28). It is impossible that this ideal should not tell, with its own spiritual force, upon the actual life of those who believe in it. It was this that broke down the dividing wall between the circumcision and the uncircumcision; it is this that has had power to sweep away slavery; it is this that has compelled the Christian man to treat every other man as a brother. Will it not, sooner or later, demand that no law or custom should be maintained which tempts man to lord it over woman, or which is unfavourable to the complete development of the woman's nature?

Already the effect of this Christian ideal of humanity has been, almost universally, to raise the actual condition of women so as to bring them nearer to an equality with men. The principle of asceticism led the Church off upon a wrong tack, with many deplorable consequences. But those who regarded marriage as a less holy state than celibacy upheld with warmth some rights of women. It is a glory of the Fathers in

general to have insisted that sexual virtue was as binding in a man as in a woman, and to have made feminine sanctity an object of devout admiration. How such respect for women would spread itself naturally through wider and more general conceptions, and tend towards the aim which we in this age are pursuing, may be seen in the following observations of Clement of Alexandria : " The virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of both is one, the Master of both is also one ; one Church, one temperance, one modesty ; their food is common, marriage an equal yoke ; respiration, sight, hearing, knowledge, hope, obedience, love, all alike " (*Instructor*, I. iv.)

It is true, nevertheless, that the sexes are different ; to the end of time, whatever men and women may have and may do in common, their differing functions will keep them vitally different from each other. This must be admitted by those who are most eager in advocating women's rights. And facts which are permanent and indestructible can claim that due regard should be paid to them in legislation, in manners and customs, and in social sentiment. It is difficult,

in view of the distinctions which separate woman from man, to say what, in any strict sense, the equality of the sexes could mean. I am far from asserting that the sexes are equal. How nearly the capacities of woman for any given work may approach to the capacities of men is a question which could best be determined by experience. For the present, the presumption undoubtedly is that the woman is permanently and in all respects the weaker vessel. But the weaker vessel may with regard to many relations be put on an equal footing with the stronger. There is no difficulty in understanding, no impossibility in bringing about, such equality. And we may draw an argument for communities and equalities which have not yet been conceded from those which have been. No one contends that the mental and moral nature of woman is more different from that of man than the physical. Now, as St. Clement says, the food of the two sexes is common. Women have been allowed from time immemorial in England to eat and drink the same things as men, and to take their food with them. They are also free to join with the other sex in physical exercises and games, in

public singing and acting. Such community in eating and drinking and playing would have been thought in ancient Greece and Asia "inexpedient and immodest." I quote these epithets from the title of a recent sermon, "To educate young women like young men, and with young men,—a thing inexpedient and immodest." Let us imagine St. Paul to come and see us as we now are. Let him be introduced to a large dinner-party, and observe the ladies, young and old, in their fashionable evening-dress, and watch the dishes and wines going round; let him afterwards look in at a ball, and see the young women dancing with the young men. Then let us suppose him to see what has been already put in practice, or even all that the most ambitious advocates of women's intellectual and civil advancement have ever dreamed of, in the way of common lecture-rooms, and common examinations, and the sharing of political functions. If he hears that there are those who cheerfully acquiesce in the dinner-party and the ball, but denounce the mixing of the sexes in study and civil duties as immodest,—is there not some risk that he might be reminded of those

who strain out the gnat but swallow the camel?

My contention is that the bearing of the original Christian teaching on the advance of women has not been rightly understood, and that it is more favourable to it than has commonly been supposed. The precepts which enjoin that wives shall submit themselves to their husbands have been erroneously taken as enforcing the subjection of women in general to the stronger sex; even as regards wives, those precepts do not necessarily discourage regulations which protect their rights in relation to property and children and personal freedom; whilst the Christian ideal of human existence, and the practice of our Lord and of the Apostles, may reasonably be claimed as being favourable to social arrangements which permit women to share things more equally with men, and so raise the communion of the sexes to a higher level.

## XVI.

### FAITH AND TOLERANCE.

(Preached before the University of Oxford, 27th May 1883.)

“Let both grow together until the harvest.”

MATTHEW xiii. 30.

IT is becoming more and more evident that, for good and for evil, we have entered upon a period of complete freedom of thought. I use the expression “freedom of thought” in its popular sense, not forgetting that there are higher senses of the word freedom. It is a time, I mean, in which opinions of every kind, the most contrary to the sacred traditions of the Church and of Christianity, are and will be free to declare themselves without drawing any punishment or disability upon those who avow them. Every day seems to bring some new triumph over old-fashioned prejudices. No religious separatism, however sturdy, can intrench itself securely

against the assaults of this freedom ; no exclusiveness, whether of the High Churchman or of the Puritan, is proof against the solvent power of the spirit of the age. An attempt to exclude an individual atheist from Parliament, not because he is an atheist but because he is an obtrusive and offensive one, and the waking up of a dormant law against infidelity to punish a particular attack upon Christianity, not because it is infidel but because it is brutal, serve but to mark the progress of the general movement. They are slight convulsive struggles attending the death of an ancient system of exclusion and repression. In the meantime they do Christianity or religion the harm of associating it, in the eyes of that generous temper which honourably distinguishes the young and the working-classes, with injustice and persecution. But the issue of them will be to make every one see the more clearly that in this country, and in the other countries through which civilised thought circulates, the condition of life in the immediate future is to be that of unrestrained freedom of opinion. Men will be civilly and socially free to think and to say whatever they please.



No wonder that the prospect should be an alarming one to those who believe in Christ and in God. If we have been accustomed to make much of public professions and of discipline and of restrictions and of votes of assemblies, it is natural that the world should seem to us, as it does to one of the two eminent Cardinals whom Oxford has given to Rome, to be rushing headlong into the abyss. But the other is surely right in holding that, if the world is on that course, the rejection of an Affirmation Bill can do little indeed to arrest the descent. We have to confront the same freedom of opinion everywhere; not only in the world of politics and administration, but in the university and the school, in the circulating library, the periodical, and the newspaper, in discussion societies, at the dinner-table and in the drawing-room. Up to what age, we are asking, can boys and girls, of susceptible and unformed minds, be kept from knowing that the religion in which they are brought up is openly rejected by persons of ample knowledge and irreproachable character? To what extent can young people be guarded from learning what strong argu-

ments can be brought against their faith? How soon ought Christianity to be made a subject of Evidences—that is to say, of question and discussion, to their minds? In what books shall we find the most demonstrative Evidences? What feeling is it just, and is it wise, to nurture in young minds towards infidelity and infidels? We may go farther, and ask, how are believers of mature age to resist the sapping influence of constant contact with unbelief? Can we expect that faith should live and keep strong in an atmosphere of universal tolerance and absolute freedom of thought?

There can be no doubt that earnest conviction has a natural tendency towards intolerance and persecution. Where there are believing masses,—*des masses croyantes*, says M. Renan in his latest work—repression of adverse opinion is inevitable. His hope for the freedom which he worships is in the fact that believing masses hardly now exist. Christianity, as we know too well, has had its persecuting days as well as its days of being persecuted. For ourselves, not only do we side with the Christian martyrs against their persecutors, but the

cruelties of those who have persecuted in the name and cause of Christianity are also odious to us ; and it seldom occurs to us to consider how much rational justification there is for the repression and extermination of opinions believed to be pernicious. The motive of persecution may be good, and its method may well seem likely, and the only one, to accomplish a desirable end. The author of *Ecce Homo* spoke a vigorous word in excuse or palliation of the religious work of the Middle Ages, and the putting of heretics to death. "Intellectually considered," he says, "these were frightful mistakes. . . . But it was the want of enlightenment, not the want of Christian humanity, that made it possible for men to commit these mistakes. . . . These warriors wanted Christ's wisdom, but they had his spirit, his Divine anger, his zeal for the franchises of the soul. Our good sense may be shocked still more when we think of the *auto da fé*. We may well exclaim upon the folly of those who could dream of curing intellectual error by intellectual bondage. . . . But if you could be sure that it was not the prophet but the pernicious sophist that burned in the fire,

and if, by reducing his too busy brain to safe and orthodox ashes, you could destroy his sophistries, and create in other minds a wholesome fear of sophistry without creating at the same time an unwholesome dread of intellectual activity and freedom, then Christian humanity might look with some satisfaction even on an *auto da fé*. At any rate, the ostensible object of such horrors was Christian, and the indignation which professedly prompts them is also Christian, and the assumption they involve, that agonies of pain and blood shed in rivers are less evils than the soul spotted and bewildered with sin, is most Christian." There are other Christian instincts, it may rightly be alleged, that would join with the wisdom that learns from experience in restraining men from attempts to exterminate error by the methods of persecution. But much that was Christian, and much that was rational, was in favour of such attempts. Besides the feeling of indignation against those who affront God, the observation of the widespread moral mischief that may be wrought by false teaching might reasonably prompt the desire to suppress the heretical teacher. Not only

the partisan of the Church in the Middle Ages, but the devotee of the Bible in Protestant countries, has found justification for that policy. The law of Israel was peremptory against any departure from the worship of Jehovah. Whoever blasphemed that name, whoever sought to entice an Israelite to go after any other god, was to be put to death without mercy. Under the Gospel the Christians of the first days were the objects of persecution, and had little power to persecute. But they were taught that the Apostle Peter was in some sense a party to the punishing of Ananias and Sapphira with death because they lied to the Holy Ghost, and that the Apostle Paul, when Elymas the sorcerer was hindering the work of the Gospel, threatened him with a visitation of blindness which promptly fell upon him. And though St. Paul gives no intimation that those members of the Church at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead were to be either formally or virtually excommunicated, but only tries to show them their error, we find the Christians instructed at a later date of the Apostolic age to separate themselves with emphasis from an heretical

teacher. "Receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting : for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." And with this instruction agrees the story that St. John, hearing that Cerinthus was in the public baths at Ephesus, cried out, "Let us flee, lest the bath fall in whilst Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is there." So that Christians in subsequent ages had good precedents for asking themselves, Can it be other than a duty, when God gives us power, to use that power for the discouragement and suppression of false teaching? How shall we be justified in allowing the seed of such teaching to be scattered freely on the soil of tender and inquisitive minds?

The conviction that persecution was a religious duty, and that the honour of God and the interests of men alike required that the true faith should be guarded from the intrusion of false doctrine, has been in fact almost universal. Toleration has been of recent growth. It has been forced upon modern societies by differences of opinion amongst their members, and it has been nourished by open and secret scepticism; and the existing freedom of opinion owes

more, probably, to these causes than it does to the diffusion of more enlightened views concerning truth and faith. But the system of preserving truth by the silencing of those who would teach error is not only known to be now impossible, it is also very generally discerned to be a fallacious and injurious system. No one in our day would revert to direct or cruel persecution. It may be too much to affirm roundly that it has been always unsuccessful or entirely mischievous. It is difficult, for example, not to think that the stern law which made idolatry punishable with death amongst the children of Israel was in its day and for the people to whom it was given a good and wholesome law. Only by such a drastic method, it would seem, could that people have been preserved from the perpetual danger to which they were exposed, of lapsing into the abominable idolatries of the nations round about them. There are different needs in different circumstances. Even in our modern societies the system of unrestrained liberty of opinion and expression has disadvantages which might well cause others besides those who are fearing for the future of the Christian religion to look back



wistfully at times to the days when religion was protected. Incessant competition of opinions, the most foolish perhaps the loudest, destructive criticism always setting itself to pull to pieces whatever convictions and habits of thought appeared to be in the way to consolidate themselves, are not fascinating to those who value reverence and quiet growth. We can imagine the finer sorts of minds becoming somewhat weary of freedom of thought. But we have learnt not to put the trust our fathers did in the repression of opinion. Even if we suppose the faith protected by the persecuting system to be entirely and infallibly true, and the policy of repression to be unmistakably successful in the silencing of all opinions divergent from it, we can see that what is secured after all may be nothing more than conformity, and that conformity or orthodoxy may be utterly dead and godless. To keep people from outwardly worshipping false gods is not necessarily to make them inwardly worship the true God. There may be unsleeping scepticism in minds which utter no question ; or there may be a torpor as of death in relation to all spiritual subjects, the only real interest being in the

things of this world. Not such worship does the Father seek. Formalism, dead orthodoxy, outward acquiescence and inward aversion,—these are natural fruits of repression where it succeeds. And to persecute without complete success brings the odium which we well understand on the protected faith. Persecution may engender enthusiasm, but it is in its victims and their friends, not in those whom it guards. There is always a halo round the heads of martyrs. As persecution becomes less and less thorough, it becomes less and less politic. Until, in days like ours, nothing is so disadvantageous to a creed as that it should be credited with inflicting pains and penalties on those who do not accept it.

These days of ours are appointed for us, and our business is to make the best of them. It is the method of our God to teach us by means of circumstances. We may often find that changes in outward circumstances put us in the way of recognising and acting upon principles which had been hidden from us. By one form of pressure or another we are now compelled to mix on terms of good fellowship with those who are holding and promulgating the most unorthodox opinions.

We have to tolerate speculations which ignore or contradict the Christian tradition by the side of Christian expositions of faith and duty. That is undoubtedly a state of things to excite serious reflection and apprehension in the minds of Christians. But when we look back, as one of the first impulses of a follower of Christ might suggest to him to do, to the original teaching of our Lord, though we find nothing perhaps which gives us direct instruction relating to these our circumstances, we can see at all events that the Lord Jesus contemplated much mixture of his disciples with the world around them. There are three of his parables concerning the kingdom of heaven, in which he prepares his disciples to acquiesce in such mixture. In the parable of the wheat and the tares he intimates that the tares were to be suffered to grow with the wheat until the harvest. He compares the kingdom of heaven to a net which is cast into the sea and gathers of every kind; and to leaven, hidden in three measures of meal and working in it till the whole is leavened. There is no special reference in these parables to beliefs or opinions; but they imply that the true children of the kingdom were to find

themselves closely associated and intermixed with those from whom they would be inclined to shrink. We are familiar enough with the kind of mixture,—of the godly and ungodly, the good and the bad,—of which our Lord speaks. St. Paul saw that the loyal believers in Christ could not refuse to keep company with fornicators and the covetous, with extortioners and idolaters, unless they would go out of the world. Many attempts have been made to banish bad company altogether from Christian circles, but such attempts have for the most part broken down in a short time and been relinquished. Strictly religious men have been content in general to live and work side by side with neighbours of whom they could not approve. But, when we think of it, is not the contact of the worldly and the self-indulgent and the vicious at least as dangerous to the Christian character as that of freethinking speculations is to Christian faith? Without denying that licence of opinion gives us grave cause for apprehension, we may look up with trust and hope to him who places us amidst our environment, and who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation

make also the way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

The misgivings of Christians are not likely to be quieted by the satisfaction and confidence with which non-Christians are anticipating the complete disintegration of supernaturalism. Their cause seems to be in the ascendant. The Christian world, through the long ages of its domination, had been endeavouring to suppress heresy and infidelity, if not by the sword and the stake, at least by disabilities of various kinds and by civil and social exclusion; Christianity had been made a part of the law of the land in all Christian countries: but the Church has been rent by divisions; toleration has become the only condition of peace; doubt has entered the general mind, and has admittedly shattered some of the traditional forms of Christian theology; liberty in its turn seems to create more of doubt, to stir up more and more of open revolt:—who can wonder that the advocates of materialistic unbelief should be triumphant, and should look for the speedy expulsion of all the old dreams about the supernatural from men's minds?

Their watchword is free competition of

opinions; the only truth to be relied on, in their view, is that which can stand every kind of questioning, and which, the more it is doubted, thrives and establishes itself the more; beliefs which do not welcome free competition, seem to them self-condemned and doomed to extinction. The characteristic movements of the time,—such as the progress of natural science, the universal liberty of inquiry and discussion, the popularisation of superficial knowledge,—seem to be all in their favour. We who are Christians cannot cheerfully accept the challenge of free competition, though we may have some uneasy feeling of being at a disadvantage in declining it. We cannot be sure that the speculating and arguing and affirming of all the busy minds in the world would produce as their resultant the truth which we chiefly value. In a sense, no doubt, the establishment of the Christian faith was a result of competition. But it was not the result of a free competition of argument. The Christian faith has owed more, perhaps, to persecution than to freedom. It throve, not indeed by persecuting, but by being persecuted. The strength of the Church, as of other causes by

which the world has been "wrought To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not," has been in possessing adherents who knew how to die. If believers in Christ should ever come to be persecuted again, their faith will recover an intensity which the atmosphere of freedom is not likely to impart to it. Let us not forget what our Christian hypothesis is, and therefore in what processes we are to look for its verification. If, as we suppose, God is speaking out of heaven to our spirits, his still small voice may require rather "the silence of the breast," than the hubbub of contending disputants, to be heard and recognised and followed.

But neither ought the many threatening noises that are in the air to deprive Christians who are in earnest of their self-possession. We that are older, in our care for the young, and young men and young women themselves, as they look out upon life, must quietly take it for granted that Christianity—that even Theism—is not to have unchallenged dominance in the civil or the social world. The Christian profession will not have a unique title to respectability. We shall have to hear and to read, even



more perhaps than we have now, assumptions that faith is dying and about to vanish from the world, that Christianity is only a sister religion to Buddhism, that the New Testament is an amalgam of the ideas and the superstitions of a supremely interesting century; that men may have their dreams in the future as they have had in the past, but on condition that the dreams are henceforth to be rigorously known as dreams. Let us understand that things may be so put, and that they will be. The fact of these things being said, and said loudly in our ears, when once we make up our minds to it, will not of necessity frighten away the faith of those on whom their faith has any hold at all.

But it should seem to us in the highest degree important that the faith of which we refuse to be robbed should become such as will stand most firmly in the age into which we are born, that it should be such as will best help and guide the age whilst it receives its own appointed help from it. We are called, if ever a call came to mortal men, to review the outworks of the Christian position, and to beware of identifying the living and life-giving faith in Christ and in God with

traditions which have associated themselves with it. To fight, as a point of honour, for a post which has become untenable, may be magnificent, but it is not war. In the history of Christianity many a loss has been a gain. It is an unspeakable advantage to us, and may reasonably be one of the strongest of Evidences to our minds, that in a multitude of instances, when controversy has led Christians back to the New Testament, they have found that our sacred book is not responsible for traditional doctrines in support of which its authority has been used. All through the Gospels and Epistles the primary and ultimate appeal is addressed by the living God to that which is spiritual in man. The conscience is to be awakened, the affections are to be touched, the will is to be won and strengthened. Jesus Christ disdained the assent, the support, that might be extorted by miracles. If there was nothing in his hearers that would give the response of faith and hope to his call of encouragement and inspiration, he was constrained to pass them by. He spoke with authority as the Son of the Father, and it was as the Son of the Father that he would be heard and followed,

or not at all. He bade men everywhere, the simple and the learned alike, enter the spiritual world and live in it as their appointed and natural home. And his Apostles faithfully echoed his words. It was nothing in the least degree surprising to them that the things which they announced were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes. For they did not carry a system of doctrines or philosophy to men; they offered reconciliation and a spiritual life, and invited their hearers to repent and believe. They appealed to that which was childlike or filial in each man, and which was liable enough to be starved in those who had the wisdom of this world. Any doubts or difficulties of this modern age which tend to throw us back on the simple Christianity of Christ and the Apostles may surely be doing us the greatest service. There must always remain a whole heaven of difference between the position of those who know nothing but nature and its blind strivings, and that of those who recognise light and guidance and promise as coming to men from the living God; but it has often happened that objections to the theology or the

practice of the Church which have been denounced as infidel and godless, suggested either by discoveries of science, or by the quickened moral feeling of advancing civilisation, or by rational inquiry, have been the divinely ordained instruments of this purification and elevation of Christianity. The Church seems to lack power to reform itself, until it is aided by pressure from without. The attitude of Christians, therefore, towards the doubts and objections of their time should reasonably be one of respect and docility rather than of resentment and fear. It is probable that such questionings call attention to weak points in the tradition of the Church, and give an opportunity of getting rid of restrictions, and of reforming corruptions, which have injured the life of Christians without their knowing it.

That is one influence which will promote a frankly tolerant disposition without necessarily weakening belief. We may note further that it is the natural habit of the simplest and most spiritual faith to look below the outward profession. There was in the Lord Jesus a divine indifference to the religious exterior. He was willing to seem

to prefer the Samaritan to the priest, the publican and the harlot to the correct Pharisee. The Apostles were taught that God is no respecter of the person of men ; that his view of them does not stop at their creed or worship any more than at their rank or reputation, but penetrates to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Ah, how different must God's judgment of orthodoxy be from that of the Church ! It is not even by their own intellectual consciousness that God's estimate of men's belief will be determined. It is that which is unconscious in every man that is most real. And when we bear this in mind with regard to ourselves ; when we know that the worshippers whom the Father seeks are those who will worship him in spirit and in truth ; when we feel that we are not competent even to judge ourselves, and can only submit our inward parts to the Divine Word that he may judge us and purge us according to his own heavenly grace ; when, that is, we surrender ourselves most inwardly and utterly to the spirit of Christ ;—will it not be natural that in our intercourse with other men, their orthodoxy or heterodoxy should in some measure pass out

of our account, and that we should know them, not after the flesh of the outward profession, but after the spirit of the conscience and the affections? There is danger, it may be objected, in such tolerance; let it be admitted; but it is a danger that must at times be frankly accepted and faced—a danger into which our Master himself leads us, and by encountering which we may conquer a more lasting safety.

But the New Testament, once more, sets before us that those who believed in Jesus Christ through the word of the Apostles were called, not so much to the acceptance of a religion as to a new life. It was a spiritual life, a life of which the motives and the consciousness and the powers were to be drawn from the unseen world. To some modern conceptions this description would suggest a life turned inwards—a life of isolation. But to the Apostles and their followers the new spiritual life of the Church was, on the contrary, a life going outwards—a life of society. And therefore they made much of actual fellowship. They could not have thought of Christianity as holding its ground and flourishing, except through the warm action

of mind on mind, of heart on heart. They believed in the communion or partnership of the saints. The Church was a living body, animated by a Divine Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son; not an aggregation of persons who happened to hold the same opinions. We should infer then that it is right and wise in these our days for those who hold to Christ to draw together in his name. The atmosphere in which we prefer to live—may I say this in all earnestness to my younger hearers?—is a matter of great importance to us. It is not intolerance, to be afraid of an atmosphere of trials and of sneers, to have a distrust of the wisdom of this world. Without undervaluing solitary conviction or the obligation resting on each man to be true to himself against the world,—recognising, on the contrary, how much the Church has owed to the prophetic fervour and courage of individuals—we may yet realise to ourselves that Christian faith is not intended to be the isolated plant of a single life. It will grow best in the intercourse of friendship, in the prosecution of common aims, in the reverent interchange of experiences, in the reading of Christian biographies,



in the uniting ordinances of the Church. I would not say, shut out the knowledge of doubts and difficulties, resolve to live in a charmed circle of ignorance and separation. But I would ask you to perceive that all intellectual positions in this perplexing world, those of unbelievers no less than of believers, are easily assailable, so that no complete satisfaction of doubts is to be expected ; but that the Christian life rises above the level of doubts and difficulties, and is a power to be fed by prayer and association, by fellowship with God and with human souls. It is possible for faith to be generous towards those who are without, and yet not careless and secure ; to be full of Christian zeal, without being exclusive. We have other reasons, besides anxiety about the preservation of our belief, for being in earnest and holding together and working together. We have to think of the duties and tasks entrusted to us, of our Christian responsibility, of the battle to be fought for Christ against the powers of evil. It is better, perhaps, that these obligations should draw us together than that we should consciously try to warm each other into a more confident belief. But

it will be one of the effects of Christian communion, by whatever impulses it may be nourished, to quicken and strengthen our faith in Christ and in the Father.

If the anticipations of unbelievers should have some temporary fulfilment, the world is likely to be in the sorer need of what can be done for it by those who still hold together and work together in the name of Christ. It is possible, it would seem, for some persons to be hopeful, even enthusiastically hopeful, about a millennium to come, when men shall be entirely emancipated from the bondage of religion, and shall believe in nothing but nature and its impulses. Darkness, they foresee, will flee away, and the true light will then shine. The heat of conflict, the eye turned continually on that which is provocative in the creed assailed, may account for some of this enthusiasm. But the more candid minds amongst unbelievers do not find the prospect of triumphant naturalism entirely delightful; they betray a certain anxiety in casting about for a foundation of morality which they can never find; they repeat to themselves and to others, Because morality exists now, therefore it will exist;

we can trust to nature to produce it. They point, with eagerness as well as with justice, to the many living persons who believe in neither God nor immortality, and who are as good husbands and fathers and as public-spirited citizens, as orthodox believers. But can they say how much of this existing morality is the product of the old Christian reverence? There is a striking testimony in that work of M. Renan from which I have already quoted. He is generously lavish in the tribute which he pays to the salutary powers of the religion in which he was brought up, and in which he has ceased to believe. The religious teaching which he received sufficed, he says, to keep him chaste throughout his whole youth. "At bottom, I feel that my life is still governed by a faith which I no longer hold. Faith has this property, that, after it has disappeared, it exerts an influence still. We continue to do mechanically what we did at first in spirit and in truth." How, we may well ask, is the sense of duty, how is reverence, how is the absolute subordination of self to higher claims, to be preserved, without the acknowledgment of a Father in heaven? The struggle for existence may be

one of the processes turned to account by a Fatherly discipline, but how can it possibly take the place of it in the education of the human spirit? Let us hope that our children may not see what the world of men, God-forsaken and left to itself, can become. It is ours to do what in us lies to avert such an experiment, not by vainly struggling to keep up barriers which God is casting down, but by striving with heart and soul to cherish the Christian life into a purer and intenser flame.

THE END.

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